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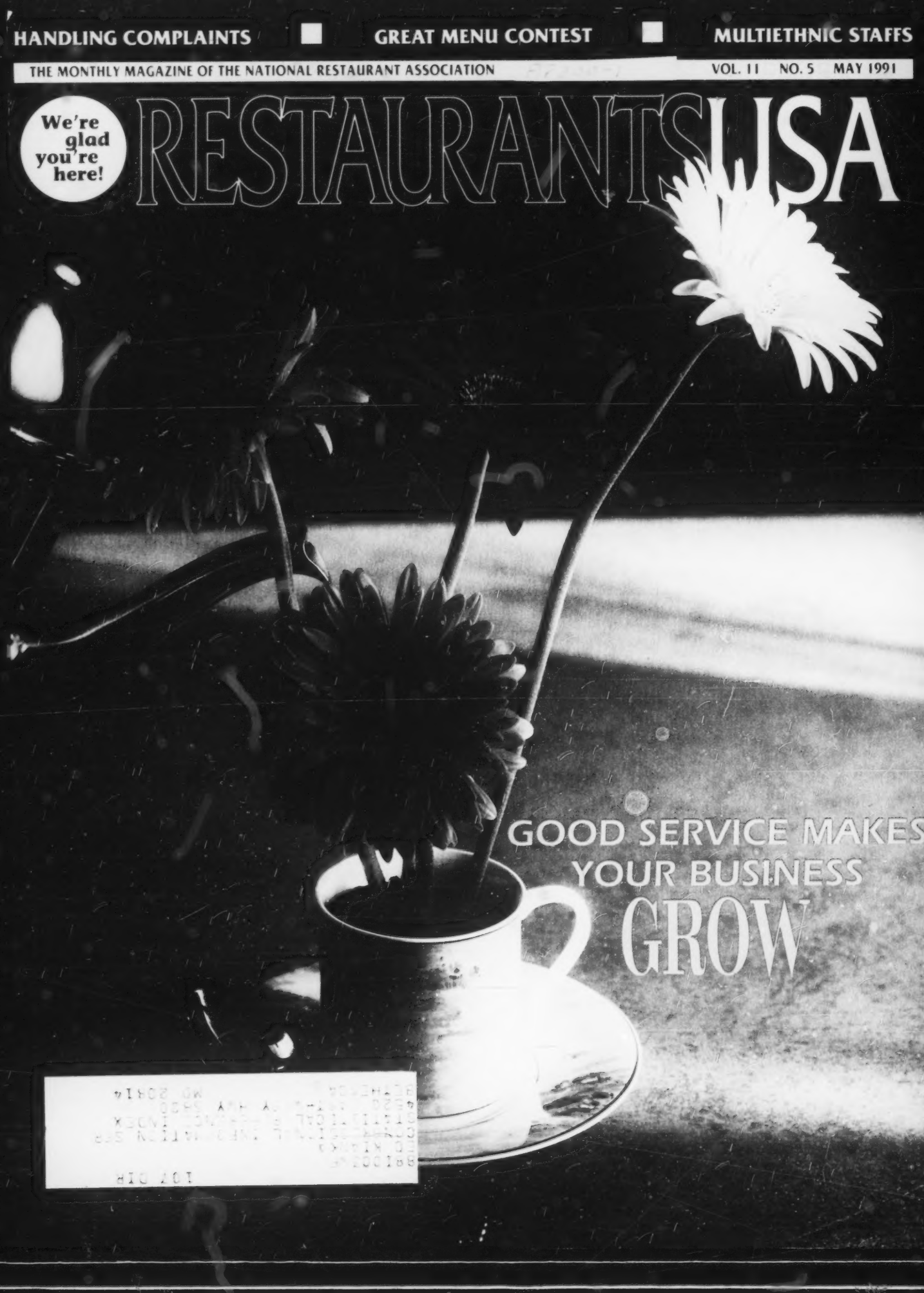
THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION VOL. 11 NO. 5 MAY 1991

We're glad you're here!

RESTAURANTS USA



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For more information on specific study groups, contact Philip Kralovec at (312) 853-2525.

Foodservice Purchasing Managers
5/16–17 Chicago, IL

International Development Executives
6/12–14 San Francisco, CA

The Executive Study Groups present semi-annual professional development programs for executives who would like to meet with their industry peers to share ideas and concerns. Executives in each of the aforementioned disciplines from member foodservice companies are welcome and encouraged to participate.

Note: *A new study group focusing on international development is currently forming. Any persons interested in participating in this group are encouraged to contact Philip Kralovec.*

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RESTAURANTS USA

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Michael E. Hurst, owner
15th Street Fisheries, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

"Show of Shows" held this month

The foodservice industry's best and brightest will gather in Chicago May 18–22 for the 72nd National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show. The Show will be held at McCormick Place and will offer more than 100,000 attendees a chance to share ideas and see the latest in foodservice products, services and equipment.

One of the highlights of the Show will be the American Culinary Classic, a cooking competition among teams from 16 nations and four continents. Representing the United States will be the 1992 Culinary Team USA, winners of the Culinary Cup in Luxembourg last year. The Classic takes place only once every four years, and we are lucky to be able to witness the competition at the Show. Four teams compete each day in glass-enclosed kitchens that give attendees a close look at world-class chefs in action.

We'll all enjoy this opportunity to get together with fellow professionals in Chicago and to learn about food trends, equipment innovations and business strategies. If you're not attending the Show this year, start thinking about setting aside time next May for the foodservice industry's most important event.

Senate Luncheon held

The association's First Annual Senate Luncheon was held on April 16 on Capitol Hill in Washington DC. Nineteen senators attended the luncheon and spoke informally with association board members, state restaurant association executives and major contributors to the association's Congressional Leadership Forum. The luncheon was a fine opportunity for restaurant industry leaders to meet with senators to discuss issues affecting foodservice.

The luncheon was highlighted by desserts prepared by members of the 1992 Culinary Team USA. Meetings like this are c[illegible] o our ongoing efforts to make our side of legisla[illegible]sues known on Capitol Hill.

Projects with industry

The Nationa[illegible]estaurant Association has long championed the hiring of nontraditional workers, and we have a program that can help employers do so. The association's Projects With Industry (PWI) program, under the direction of A. Philip Nelan, acts as a liaison between the restaurant industry and qualified people with disabilities who would like to be employed.

This program works on two levels. Interested foodservice operations are contacted about vocational rehabilitation agencies that can match the employer with trained individuals. Rehabilitation agencies, in turn, are contacted about operators who are interested in employing people with disabilities.

If you are interested in starting a hiring program for those with disabilities and would like more information, contact A. Philip Nelan at (202) 331-5988. Be sure to see the related article on page 18 of this magazine.

Alcohol education program available

The association's Educational Foundation is preparing to launch the "Servsafe Responsible Alcohol Service Program." The program will be introduced as a seminar

in Chicago just before the Show. The Servsafe program puts a strong emphasis on training managers to design and enforce an alcohol policy for their operations. The program also shows managers how to train their servers to recognize inebriation and intervene effectively.

The program will test managers using a certification examination. Managers will be supplied with videos, worker's manuals and tests for use with servers in the individual units. Permanent records of both managers and servers who are certified will be maintained at the Foundation. The program is a new and desirable alternative for alcohol-awareness training.

Congressional Directory holds valuable information

The new Congressional Directory is now available. The directory contains vital statistics on each member of Congress, gives phone and fax numbers and lists key staff members. The directory also includes committee assignments and maps of Congressional districts. The cost of the directory is $7.50, and it may be ordered from the association's government affairs department. Contact Gay Westbrook at (202) 331-5915.

"We're glad you're here!" promotional items

In these times of stiff competition and economic uncertainty, it is more important than ever to let customers know how much we value their business. The "We're glad you're here!" promotional items offered by the association help operators get this important message across to patrons. There are 19 products available with this slogan, including pins, posters, table tents, lollipops, stickers and floormats.

To help your staff live up to the promise of this slogan, the association has produced *The Courtesy Checklist.* This 16-page pamphlet covers critical moments of interaction between staff and guests in both tableservice and counterservice establishments. It suggests what actions and statements create an atmosphere of warm hospitality. To obtain order forms for "We're glad you're here!" materials or to order *The Courtesy Checklist,* call the National Restaurant Association at (800) 424-5156.

In April, 71 new members joined the association. We welcome each of you, and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Hurst

Michael E. Hurst
President and Chairman of the Board

RESTAURANTS USA

COVER STORY: GOOD SERVICE MAKES YOUR BUSINESS GROW

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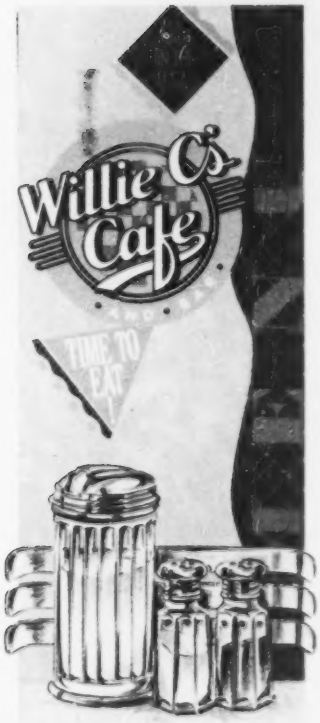

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Cover photo by Gary Landsman

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Educational Foundation announces scholarships

A number of $750 scholarships will be made available to qualified students and managers enrolled in the Management Development Diploma Program offered by the Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association.

The new scholarships are available to part-time and full-time hospitality program students enrolled in the Diploma Program, as well as to individuals taking the program through home study. Full-time students are eligible for scholarships when they first enroll in the Diploma Program. Part-time students and home-study students may apply for scholarships after completing four of the required eight courses.

"The benefits of the scholarship are twofold," says Foundation President Daniel Gescheidle. "Not only do individuals receive the funds to help pursue their education, but by completing the Diploma Program, they earn an industry-recognized diploma from the National Restaurant Association."

Gescheidle adds that the program's home-study option enables managers to further their education in foodservice management without returning to school full-time.

Scholarship awards will be distributed three times throughout the year, and schools offering the Diploma Program are eligible to receive up to five scholarships each calendar year.

Applications for the scholarships are now available. Completed applications for the first Diploma Scholarships must be postmarked no later than June 1, 1991, to receive consideration. Applicants will be judged on industry-related work experience, grade-point average, goals and commitment of the applicant, and perceptions of the industry's future. The first Diploma Program scholarships will be awarded in August.

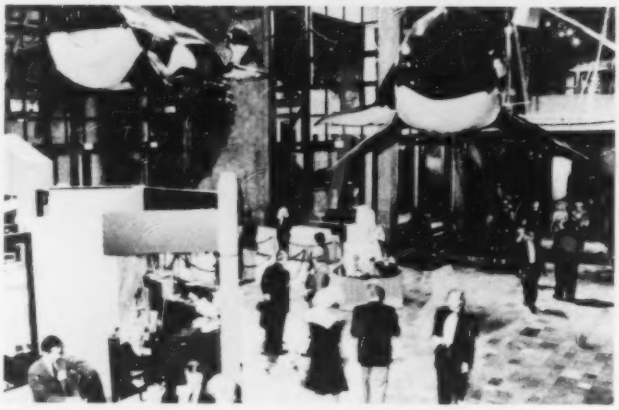
For an application or for more information, contact the Scholarship Services Department, Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association, 250 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 1400, Chicago, IL 60606. Or call (312) 715-1010.

Vintage '91 pours wine and scholarships

More than 430 restaurateurs, hoteliers and wine industry professionals gathered at the Monterey Wine Festival Vintage '91, held March 17–19 in Monterey, California.

Attendees tasted wines poured by more than 225 California wineries, and bidders at festival auctions raised more than $32,000 for educational scholarships.

The sixth annual event was kicked off this year with an opening-night reception at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.



The Monterey Wine Festival's opening-night reception was held at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Wine festival attendees learn about the finer points of wine at a festival seminar.

Gregg Wuthe

High bidders Bert Cutino (far left) and Ted Balestreri (far right) flank the festival monk and their prize bottle of wine.

The high bidders during the festival's live auction were Ted J. Balestreri and Bert Cutino, co-owners of Monterey's Sardine Factory restaurant. Their prize purchase was an 18-liter 1987 Estate Crane Creek Cabernet Sauvignon from Lambert Bridge Winery.

Car rental discount increased

National Car Rental has increased the discount offered to association members. The discount on daily and weekly business rates has been upped from 20 percent to 25 percent.

In addition, association members are entitled to a 5 percent discount on leisure rates. To make a reservation, members can call National Car Rental at (800) CAR-RENT and mention their National Restaurant Association discount ID number. Members receive the special rates by showing their membership cards or discount ID cards at the time of rental.

Ramada Renaissance wins environmental award

The Ramada Renaissance Hotel in Atlanta has been presented with the Environmental Quality Achievement Award for 1991 by the American Hotel & Motel Association (AH&MA).

The winning hotel property was chosen from entries submitted by hotels and motels that have worked to improve environmental quality in areas of property/community beautification, natural resources and conservation. The Ramada Renaissance won the award for improving the area surrounding the hotel and initiating a recycling program.

The hotel's program began with the "Adopt-A-Street" program, in which employees of the hotel gather weekly to pick up trash along a one-mile stretch of highway near the hotel. To reduce landscape waste at the hotel, flower beds of annuals were replaced with flowers that grow back each year. Recycling is also an integral part of the hotel's ongoing operations. White paper, glass bottles, aluminum cans, cooking grease and oil are all recycled.

The Environmental Quality Achievement Award of the AH&MA is now in its tenth year.

Walt Disney World recognized for accessibility

The presidential board charged with implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act has recognized Walt Disney World Co. for its initiatives to increase accessibility for people with disabilities.

The U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board presented the company with its second annual Chairman's Award, given to "recognize the private-sector initiatives which increase accessibility to all Americans," said board chairman William H. McCabe.

"Throughout the design and construction of the theme parks, transportation system, hotels and other amenities, Disney has demonstrated its commitment and sensitivity to accessible design," said McCabe.

The award was presented during a recent public forum in central Florida on new laws regarding access for people of varying abilities. After the presentation, board members heard from Dick Wiedenbeck, vice president, Walt Disney World Design & Engineering, about future projects designed to further increase accessibility. With help and input from board member Robert Cothren, who is blind, Wiedenbeck demonstrated a prototype Braille map that is being developed for use as a guide to the Disney theme parks.

Address your comments about ***Restaurants USA*** and current foodservice issues to: ***Restaurants USA*** Feedback, National Restaurant Association, 1200 Seventeenth Street, NW, Washington DC 20036. Submissions for publication may be edited for length.

EEOC chairman warns against sex discrimination

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has asked the National Restaurant Association to urge restaurants—especially fine-dining restaurants—not to discriminate on the basis of gender, with regard to employment practices. The commission is reacting to increased complaints of sex discrimination in fine-dining restaurants.

"Based on our observations and anecdotal evidence, we believe that sex discrimination in fine-dining restaurants is a very widespread practice," said EEOC Chairman Evan Kemp in a recent interview with ***Restaurants USA.*** "We want to send a message out to these restaurants that they can't discriminate."

EEOC Chairman Evan Kemp

Restaurants, like other employers, must treat all qualified applicants fairly and take the most qualified.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on gender—against either men or women—in all terms and conditions of employment, including recruitment, hiring, firing, assignment, promotion, pay and benefits.

The law applies to employers of 15 or more full-time or part-time employees. EEOC, the federal agency that enforces the law, defines an employee as anyone who is on the payroll for at least 20 weeks of the year.

Alleged bias against female servers

Although EEOC cannot pinpoint any statistical increase in sex-discrimination charges against fine-dining restaurants, Kemp said his agency has recently received several nearly identical complaints from women who had unsuccessfully applied for higher-paying tipped positions in upscale restaurants or who were discouraged from applying because the restaurants had a reputation for hiring only men.

The complaints allege that the accused restaurateurs hired waitstaff on the premise that tuxedo-clad

men are better than women at producing the proper atmosphere in a fine-dining establishment.

Kemp recalled his own recent dining experience in a restaurant that had a glaring lack of female servers. When asked about the absence, Kemp's waiter responded that "you just don't have women as waiters in nice restaurants." Kemp said it is exactly this attitude that EEOC is eager to stop.

The commission hopes to solve the discrimination problem by educating employers about the law.

Kemp stressed that EEOC would prefer not to initiate a major enforcement effort. Instead, the EEOC hopes to solve the problem by educating foodservice employers about the law. "We hope that this is just something that the industry hasn't been paying attention to and that can be turned around once restaurants are made aware of the law," explained Kemp.

EEOC is currently pressing at least 22 cases of sex discrimination against fine-dining establishments. The cases cite operators for allegedly aiming advertising and recruitment at men only and then refusing to hire females or assign them to foodserver positions.

Kemp emphasized, however, that EEOC has not targeted restaurateurs for increased investigation. "We're not going to go out looking for restaurants that don't have women, but we will accept and have been accepting charges of discrimination," he said.

Review of hiring practices recommended

"If a restaurant manager looks around and all he has are men waiting on tables, then it ought to occur to him that maybe something is going on in his hiring practices that needs more attention," said Kemp. The chairman recommended that restaurateurs review employment policies with managers and other key personnel to ensure that women are offered equal opportunity to higher-paying tipped employment.

"Restaurants, like other employers, must treat all qualified applicants fairly and take the most qualified. Don't make hiring decisions based on a preconceived notion that a woman cannot be as good a waiter as a man. Look at the individual," said Kemp.

—Andrew McLauchlin

Restaurateurs host Senate Luncheon

The association's First Annual Senate Luncheon was held on April 16 on Capitol Hill, hosted by Sen. Bob Kerrey (D–NE) and the National Restaurant Association.

The event gave restaurateurs and senators a chance to meet and share ideas in a social setting complete with outstanding food. Among the 19 senators who attended were Finance Committee Chairman Lloyd Bentsen (D–TX), Minority Leader Robert Dole (R–KS) and Majority Whip Wendell Ford (D–KY).

(continued)

DC ROUNDUP

☐ *FICA repeal introduced.* In response to requests from the National Restaurant Association and many individual restaurant operators, Rep. Byron Dorgan (D–ND) and Sen. John Breaux (D–LA) introduced legislation in late March to repeal a 1987 law that requires employers to pay Social Security (FICA) payroll taxes on all tips employees report.

The bills (H.R. 1472 and S. 765) would reinstate pre-1988 law by requiring employers to pay FICA taxes only on tip income up to the applicable federal or state minimum wage.

As of April 11, H.R. 1472 had attracted 20 cosponsors, and S. 765 had 15. Much more support is needed to pressure House and Senate leaders to consider repealing the FICA tax on tips. Call your lawmakers today at the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. Ask them to cosponsor H.R. 1472 (in the House) and S. 765 (in the Senate).

☐ *Association pushes EITC expansion.* The National Restaurant Association took the offensive last month in pushing to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a tax break for low-income workers with children.

With the federal minimum wage having increased 12 percent on April 1 and Senate Labor Committee Chairman Ted Kennedy (D–MA) leading calls for further wage hikes, the association delivered a background paper on the EITC to every member of Congress. The paper urges lawmakers to refine and expand the EITC rather than try to use the minimum wage to raise the earnings of low-income households.

The association pointed out that the EITC targets the "working poor" more efficiently than the minimum wage does. An expanded EITC would do more to bring these families out of poverty, while still providing incentives and opportunities for work.

☐ *Pizza Hut calls for permanent TJTC.* Joseph Froehle, a market manager for Pizza Hut, Inc., in Nashville, Tennessee, traveled to Washington DC on April 10 to ask House tax writers to extend the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC) permanently.

TJTC, a tax break available since 1978 for employers who hire disadvantaged or disabled workers from nine "target" groups, is due to expire at the end of this year. Bills have been introduced in the House (H.R. 22) and Senate (S. 581) to make TJTC permanent.

Froehle told the House Ways and Means Committee that more employers, especially small restaurants, would take advantage of the program if Congress made TJTC permanent.

In addition to the 19 senators, attendees included National Restaurant Association board members, state restaurant association executives and several major contributors to the Congressional Leadership Forum (CLF), which sponsored the event.

Separate food stations, representing the cuisines of different regions of the country, were created by the Senate Dining Services. Desserts were prepared by members of the 1992 Culinary Team USA, winners of the Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg in November 1990.

After the luncheon, Culinary Team manager Keith Keogh and the team made a special presentation for the Ladies of the Senate, a group composed of wives of senators. A 10-minute film on the selection of the Culinary Team USA was shown. Team members Martha Crawford and Louis Borochaner explained how they created their desserts, and Keogh and Roland Henin discussed food trends and nutrition.

—Jennifer Batty

Senator Bob Kerrey (D–NE), left, restaurateur and host of the Senate Luncheon, talks with association board member Herman Cain, right, president and CEO of Godfather's Pizza, Inc., and chairman of the association's Government Relations Committee.

Photos by Sonny Odom

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Lloyd Bentsen (D–TX), center, joins 1992 Culinary Team USA manager Keith Keogh, left, and team coach Roland Henin, right, at the Senate Luncheon.

Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R–KS), left, waits to try a bowl of New England clam chowder, a regional dish prepared by the Senate Dining Services.

1992 Culinary Team USA member Darryl Evans, right, offers Senator Charles Robb (D–VA), left, one of the team's tempting pastries.

Is polystyrene worth a second look?

The debate about the health and environmental effects of the use and reuse of polystyrene foam products has been raging for several years, and still no solid conclusions have been reached. Until research uncovers *the* solution to our packaging questions, restaurateurs will continue to be met at every turn with conflicting data and unanswered questions.

Proponents of either paper products or polystyrene can find experts—and even "scientific" evidence—to back up their claims. Adding to the restaurateur's dilemma is the fact that customers' perceptions are as important as reality when it comes to choosing packaging.

So, what is the correct environmental choice? The question is a difficult one for foodservice operators. It is often reported that polystyrene packaging is clogging landfills, but this claim is highly exaggerated. It is true that polystyrene is bulkier than other packaging and is nonbiodegradable, but polystyrene is not the source of the majority of our trash. According to the Polystyrene Packaging Council in Washington DC, foam foodservice products make up less than 1 percent of total landfill volume. In addition, polystyrene foam is 90 percent air and compresses easily in a compactor or under the weight of a landfill.

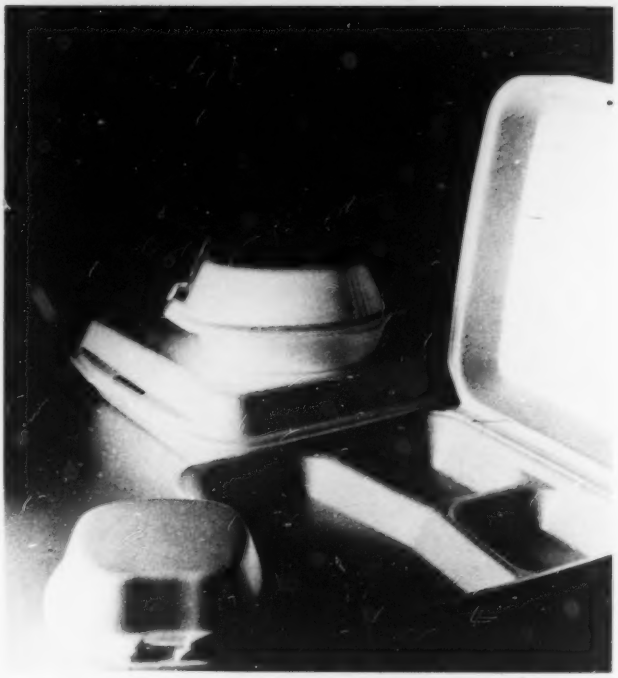
Polystyrene is also often accused of polluting the air and destroying the ozone layer. Although polystyrene production does release some chemicals into the air, proponents of polystyrene use argue that such emissions are no more dangerous than gases and pollutants released during the manufacture (and later degradation) of other packaging options. Proponents also claim that polystyrene production puts less of a drain on energy and natural resources than producing other packaging does.

Polystyrene recycling

Polystyrene can be recycled. Although polystyrene recycling programs have been slower to develop than have those for some other materials, they are beginning to take root nationwide. Two factors working against polystyrene recycling are collection (a problem with all recyclable materials) and a resale market for the recycled product. Strides have been made regarding the first factor. According to the Polystyrene Packaging Council, 28 states now support some type of polystyrene recycling in restaurants, schools and neighborhoods.

The second problem is fading as well. Foam products can be recycled into a variety of products, ranging from cafeteria trays to coat hangers. Even buildings can be constructed from recycled polystyrene. The first "recycled" McDonald's restaurant opened in 1990 in Tempe, Arizona. The restaurant's building itself contains large amounts of recycled polystyrene.

Until recently, polystyrene foam could not be recycled and used again for one of its most popular uses—foodservice packaging. Under current FDA regulations, it is deemed unsanitary to have recycled polystyrene come in contact with food items. But a new packaging product called RECOUP may change the resale picture.



The new foam material, developed by Lin Pac Plastics, headquartered in the United Kingdom, is made of 50 percent recycled post-consumer foam and 50 percent "virgin" polystyrene. The recycled layer is embedded between two newly made polystyrene layers. Hence, no recycled product touches the food, meeting all current regulations.

In late March, Hardee's Food Systems, Inc., based in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, announced that it would become the first restaurant company to use RECOUP. The fast food chain plans to initiate use of the packaging for several hamburger items in more than 300 restaurants in the Baltimore-Washington area, and Hardee's hopes to expand usage to other products and areas by year's end.

Hardee's stands behind its use of polystyrene, praising its recyclability, as well as its insulating and strength characteristics. "It is also the only disposable food packaging currently available that is, in fact, being recycled," says John Merritt, senior vice president, public relations, for Hardee's. The company views the development and widespread use of RECOUP as a chance to boost growing recycling efforts as it "opens the door to create a market for recycled materials across America," says Merritt. Hardee's is launching a polystyrene recycling program as it ushers in its new packaging.

Many more questions

This recycled polystyrene packaging certainly is not an answer to all the questions about foodservice packaging. It may only raise new questions in the "paper vs. polystyrene" debate. Restaurateurs and consumers will have to continue to weigh the costs and benefits of the use of all types of packaging.

For more information on polystyrene and polystyrene recycling, contact the Polystyrene Packaging Council in Washington DC at (202) 822-6424.

—Melanie A. Crosby

SERVICE IN THE 1990s

Timing, teamwork and training are the elements of good service.

THE WAY TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

by Gary M. Stern

Experts agree: Service is becoming the most important part of a restaurant's mix.

"Service is playing a bigger role in the '90s because competition for the discretionary dollar has become so fierce," says Bonnie Schwartz, an American Express marketing director formerly in charge of restaurant marketing. Service, she stresses, is one way a restaurant can differentiate itself from the competition. The importance of service cuts across every segment of the restaurant market: fast food, family-style restaurants and upscale eateries.

Susy Davidson, food editor of *Food & Wine* magazine, says that more than ever before, patrons are dining where they feel comfortable. "Customers want to feel welcome," she says. "Too many restaurants in the past were more interested in intimidating their patrons than welcoming them. Whether diners are eating in fast food restaurants or Lutece, they want to be told and shown, 'We're happy to have you here, and we'd love to have you back.' "

"People will forgive a lot if service is helpful and friendly," says New York City food and restaurant consultant Clark Wolf, who has consulted for the Russian Tea Room and Loews Hotels. "We [customers] don't want to be told what's right or wrong. The haughty tuxedoed waiter is out."

Consultant Walter Staib, based in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, points out that service can attract repeat clients as much as food can. "How many people are true connoisseurs?" he asks rhetorically. Most of all, they expect attentive and friendly service. "If the service is courteous, you can get return customers," he declares.

Unfortunately, restaurants don't always measure up to customer expectations for service. Tim Zagat, publisher of the *Zagat Survey* restaurant guides, points out that his research invariably shows that patrons rate the service they receive at a restaurant far lower than its food and decor.

Key factor #1: timing

Timing is a major factor in satisfying a diner's expectations. Tim Zagat defines this timing as being able to handle diners promptly and smoothly—and being alert to customer needs so that no one sits for 10 minutes without getting the server's attention. The menu, the equipment, the server's sensitivity to the diner, and the relationship between the front and back of the house all determine a meal's timeliness.

Timeliness affects the entire meal from beginning to end. How long does it take the server to put the menu down? How long does it take the check to arrive? A server should understand how long a dish takes to prepare and should inform the patron that the swordfish, for example, may take 20 minutes extra to prepare.

A staff's attention to detail serves as another factor in customer satisfaction. If the waitstaff is trained efficiently, servers will master table maintenance, including knowing when to refill the water glass, when to provide the dessert menu and when to refill coffee. Knowing when to present the check is itself an art that servers have to master, suggests Clark Wolf.

Steve Shapiro, a San Diego training consultant who runs special seminars in training professional servers, notes that one major complaint is that servers are indifferent. Shapiro says the secret of being a successful server is caring. The server who cares, he says, "takes the focus off the tip and puts it on the customer."

Shapiro trains servers to read a table by asking, "Why are these patrons dining out?" Diners celebrating a birthday will expect one kind of service, and a business or solo diner will expect another. After determining the motivation of a table's diners, the waitstaff can focus on "giving individ-

ualized, personalized attention and customized service based upon the guests' needs."

Ironically, says Shapiro, one of the least likely reasons for dining out is eating. If customers are just hungry, says Shapiro, they can easily go to a grocery store.

Timothy Firnstahl of the Seattle-based restaurant consulting firm Ultimate Strategy Services notes that consumer research reveals that a major factor in most patrons' lives is a lack of free time. When dining out, these customers want service to be sensitive to their time needs. Most diners

eating at a moderately priced restaurant want to be in and out in 45 minutes, he says. "Protracted dining experiences are a thing of the past," he says. Of course, in upscale restaurants, diners spending $100 on a meal may choose to linger a bit longer.

Consultant Firnstahl adds that even patrons dining at a less-than-upscale restaurant expect high-quality service. "Do people expect less service because they don't earn a lot of money?" asks Firnstahl. "Does somebody who spends less money have a less busy life?"

The Manhattan restaurant Alo Alo was recently voted in an American Express survey as offering the best service in New York. David Pearlberg, general manager of the restaurant, says his staff is constantly working on timing. Timing results from teamwork. "Busboys have to work with the waitstaff, and the waitstaff has to work with the kitchen," says Pearlberg.

Factor #2: teamwork

When David Bouley, owner of the restaurant Bouley in New York City, read a survey which showed that his restaurant scored much higher on food and decor than service, he decided to do something about it. He had a meeting with everyone on his staff, from the sommelier to the dishwasher, to discuss how to improve service. The staff decided to write its own customized employee manual, detailing what each person's responsibility was.

"Many times," says Bouley, "there were problems that a dishwasher would create that reflected on the performance of the waiter." With the manual reinforcing how each employee is responsible to another, teamwork was heightened at Bouley. To enhance service even more, Bouley is using a detailed computer system that documents the dining preferences of regular customers: where they like to sit, what wines they prefer and which dishes they like.

Before encountering the server, the customer meets an important person on a restaurant's staff: the host or hostess. David Pearlberg describes the hostess as the person "who starts the restaurant's relationship with the patron." Although some restaurants are interested in hiring a hostess who looks like a *Vogue* model, Pearlberg chooses a hostess who can build instant rapport with the restaurant's clientele. He instructs hostesses to come across as pleasant and easygoing without being pretentious, setting the tone for his casual restaurant. The host or hostess should inform patrons how long the wait is, direct them to the bar and show courtesy in welcoming customers.

Alo Alo waitress Nonnie Weaver was voted the best waitress on the East Coast in an American Express poll. She points out that Alo Alo pools its tips so that all servers must depend on each other to keep satisfied. "This way everyone makes consistent amounts and is responsible for helping each other," she says.

Weaver goes on to say that good service revolves around "having a sense of what the customer wants from you." While she is greeting the patrons, she looks for signals as to

One major complaint from customers is that servers are indifferent. The secret of being a successful server is caring.

whether a diner wants to be left alone or whether the diner wants to converse with her. Some tourist customers clue her in on wanting to know facts about New York, and others express an interest in knowing details about the pasta dishes. Some patrons, including those who are transacting business, prefer that the waitress not intrude on the table's conversation. Couples on a romantic date, too, may wish to be left alone.

Factor #3: training

In one recent nationwide poll, Barrett's on Boston Harbour was voted the restaurant with the best service in the country. According to general manager and operating partner Kevin Vitale, a restaurant must have a dedicated and organized approach to service. Hiring people with the right attitude is an important ingredient in providing good service, he says. Vitale hires only people who enjoy serving and who "don't have anything against life." He also looks for servers who take pride in themselves and are friendly and upbeat.

After hiring, Barrett's provides a week of training. During the training, the chef reviews dishes with the new servers, discussing each dish's ingredients. Servers are later tested on the information, and those who score poorly are given one more opportu-

Service is a sincere desire to take care of guests—not the policy and rules posted on the wall.

nity to improve. If a server's score is still low the second time, he or she is dismissed. "We want people who are serious about the job," says Vitale.

After the initial week of training, the novice server spends a week with an experienced waitperson who shows the new server the ropes. "If you don't train them properly," says Vitale, "you'll be paying for it later on, because customers won't come back."

Part of eliciting good service from the waitstaff involves recognizing employees. The Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn in Frankenmuth, Michigan, has created a special category for waiters and waitresses who excel—they are known as "supervisors." These expert servers are given special authority to oversee fellow employees.

Bill Zehnder, one of the restaurant's owners, says monthly meetings are held during which service standards and hospitality are discussed. Employees who make a special effort to improve service are given gift certificates to use in the restaurant's retail shop. The fact that all employees share in profits and receive bonuses heightens their desire to offer high-quality service.

Tim Zagat notes that service staff members in the United States have not received the same respect as chefs. Over the last 20 years, chefs have gained celebrity status through publicity and accreditation through graduate programs. When schools treat service with the same respect as they do cooking, service will improve, suggests Zagat.

The New England Culinary Institute, located in Montpelier, Vermont, is inaugurating its hotel and restaurant management program with an emphasis on restaurant service, reports John Dranow, the school's co-founder. Dranow says the course will teach future restaurant managers the basics of serving. "The level of service has not kept pace with the level of cuisine in this country," says Dranow. He defines the basics of serving as knowing how to carry a tray, take an order, communicate with a customer and talk with one's staff.

Buying some feedback

To obtain feedback on his staff's service, general manager Carl Schuster of Shula's Steak House in Miami Lakes, Florida, uses a shopping service that pays a once-a-month unannounced, anonymous visit to Shula's and evaluates service. Schuster says the hired shopper's comments "keep us on track." Rather than using these evaluations punitively, Schuster looks for positive information from the service. In addition, Schuster strives to educate his staff by holding monthly meetings on new wines and new dishes—and to review monthly goals.

K.C. Castro, a waitress at Shula's for 11 years, knows the importance of repeat business to the success of a restaurant. When customers sit down at one of her tables at Shula's, Castro immediately greets the patrons and "treats them as if they were guests in my house. You start with a smile," she says. After giving patrons a few minutes to read the menu and order, Castro makes sure that the salad arrives quickly and that the main dish arrives soon after the salad is consumed. Patrons who wish to linger are free to do so.

Doug Brooks is the senior vice president of operations for the central region for Chili's, Inc., a chain of 230 moderately priced family restaurants. Brooks is responsible for overseeing service, and he says that sound service starts with a management team that encourages good service as part of the restaurant's culture. "We feel that service is a state of mind. It's a sincere desire to take care of guests—not the policy and rules posted on the wall," says Brooks.

In an ongoing training program specializing in role-playing, servers are encouraged to "exceed customer expectations." Brooks explains that each guest has different expectations, and waiters are trained to provide speedy service for those who want it and service that is relaxed for those who prefer a slower pace.

Consistent service

Although fine-quality service is often associated with independent operations as opposed to chains, independent restaurateurs can learn something about service from the fast food industry, suggests Carlos Garcia of Stephens-Bangs Associates, a consulting firm based in Southfield, Michigan. "You expect to find consistency" in quickservice restaurants, says Garcia, and consistency is a key feature of a high-quality operation at any level.

In fact, it is that consistency of service that will make a patron choose to dine at an operation consistently. As Kevin Vitale puts it, "Service has become as important as the food itself." ❑

Gary Stern is a writer in New York City.

Expert thoughts on service

Good service incorporates many elements, and everyone has his or her own ideas about what it takes to deliver high-quality service. Here are some ideas from experts:

- ☐ *Carl Schuster, general manager of Shula's Steak House:* "The key to good service is hiring people who want to serve people and who aren't in it just for the money."
- ☐ *Steve Shapiro, training consultant:* "The professional server will treat all guests as if they were his only guests. He'll have a sharp appearance, confident approach, a positive attitude and thorough product knowledge."
- ☐ *Nonnie Weaver, waitress at Alo Alo:* "If the customer has a complaint about the food and wants to return it, the manager should step in immediately, ask how he can help and say, 'Can I get you something else?' Never argue with a customer."
- ☐ *Bill Zehnder, co-owner of Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn:* "The more attentive an owner is to his employees, the longer they will remain with the restaurant. Service turnover leads to problems. We strive for retention with staff scholarship programs, bonuses and profit-sharing."
- ☐ *David Pearlberg, general manager at Alo Alo:* "I want the staff to have fun. I promote their having a good time and interacting with each other. The customer picks up that high energy level."
- ☐ *K.C. Castro, waitress at Shula's Steak House:* "If you come in once, I may not remember you. But by your second or certainly by the third visit, I'll remember. Everyone likes to be recognized."

HOW TO KEEP THEM COMING BACK

Regular customers deserve special treatment, and these restaurants have devised promotions aimed straight at loyal patrons.

by Julie Fintel

"Thank you for being a steady customer. We appreciate your business. Please come back again."

Restaurateurs are finding many different ways to say these things to customers who eat often at their restaurants. Just as important as attracting new customers is turning that new customer into an old friend. The traveling person on an expense account may be a big spender when dining out, but it is the regular customer who is the backbone of a restaurant's business.

Sometimes, showing your regular customers that you care can be more effective than telling them. The Rusty Pelican chain, based in San Juan Capistrano, California, rewards those who dine regularly at their restaurants with priority reservations.

Demand for a table at the Rusty Pelican can be great, especially on weekends and especially at oceanside locations. Regular customers, who have been singled out by managers, are given a plastic card with unlisted phone numbers for the chain's restaurants. When customers use the unlisted number, a special phone in the restaurant rings, and the reservation-taker knows to give priority to the caller. "Of course we ask that they don't wait until the last minute, especially on Fridays and Saturdays. Other regular customers may be ahead of them," says Susan Schneider, the chain's former marketing manager. "But we do what we can. We give them the next available table, and we do set aside a certain number of tables for our priority customers. It's our way of saying 'thank you' to regular customers."

T.L.C.

In Virginia Beach, Gus' Mariner Restaurant created a T.L.C. (The Local Customer) program to reward local clientele. Like other restaurants in the resort town, Gus' Mariner formerly did not accept reservations. During tourist season, which begins each year in May, the wait for a table is often two hours. Locals who patronized the restaurant during the off-season didn't think it was fair that they had to wait along with the tourists during the summer, and food and beverage director Kyle Riley agreed.

Locals can now qualify as frequent diners by eating at the restaurant 10 times during the off-season (September through February). They then become card-bearing regulars, and that qualifies them to be able to reserve a table during the peak season. There are also added bonuses including a complimentary special each night (such as an appetizer or glass of wine) and three free cocktail parties a year.

"This is our fifth year for the program, and demand is unbelievable," says Riley. "And you wouldn't believe what people will do to get a card when May comes and they realize they haven't qualified. The program has meant an enormous boost to business."

The definition of locals may be stretched a bit at the Yellow Brick Toad, which is located in Lambertville, New Jersey, a rural area between Philadelphia and New York City. But the restaurant definitely depends on a clientele of regulars, even if many of the regulars must drive an hour from the big cities to get to the restaurant.

Owner David Duthie is always thinking of ways to get his customers to come back. One such inspiration is the Chef du Jour promotion. Duthie invites customers to apply for the opportunity to spend an afternoon and evening cooking a favorite recipe in the restaurant kitchen for the customers. Duthie originally planned for the promotion to last only during the slow winter months. The guest-chef program has increased business on those nights by 500 or 600 percent. "The key is to get guest chefs with lots of friends," says Duthie. "We want them to invite their family, their friends, the neighborhood and the people at work."

Make them part of the family

The secret to getting guests to return is to make them feel special. "Coddle them," says Joyce Goldstein, who owns Square One in San Francisco. Goldstein even telephones regular customers if her restaurant is serving their favorite meals.

Whereas Goldstein can keep all her customers' likes and dislikes in her head, other restaurateurs rely on written records. Danny Meyer, of Union Square Cafe in New York City, has a notebook where he writes down the preferences of his regular customers: whether a person wants to sit in the smoking or the nonsmoking section, which table he or she prefers, what wine or drink the person is most likely to order, and even the person's favorite waiter. Customers especially appreciate receiving favored treatment when they are bringing guests to dine at a restaurant.

In addition to making regular customers feel like part of the family, each year the Yellow Brick Toad singles out one person or a couple who dine regularly at the restaurant for special recognition. When a customer or couple is named Patron of the Year, their names are added to the Patron of the Year plaque. These customers are honored at the restaurant's annual birthday party. "Members of the Patron of the Year Society are given royal treatment every time they come in to our restaurant," says Duthie.

Newsletters that bring 'em back

A newsletter that is sent to regular customers can be an invaluable tool for letting patrons know more about the restaurant, the people who work there and the people who come there. As readers learn more about the restaurant, they begin to feel connected to part of a larger community—a community with a common interest in good food, good wine and your restaurant. Successful newsletters include stories about staff members as well as customers; people love to read about themselves.

Square One's Goldstein mails a newsletter to 7,000 regular customers. Written in a personal style, the letter lets regular customers find out first about special events at Square One.

Union Square Cafe's Meyer has formatted the restaurant's newsletter to look like a regular letter typed on a typewriter. "We haven't gone to desktop publishing because we think that would give it an unwanted 'corporate' feeling," says Meyer.

Jim Lark, co-owner of The Lark in Bloomfield, Michigan, uses the newsletter he sends to his regular customers to pass on travel tips about places he has been to, places where he has eaten and stayed, and wines that he has tasted. When a customer hasn't been in to The Lark for six months, he or she is sent a copy of the newsletter with a gold sticker attached. The sticker says, "We miss you."

"When the customer sees the sticker, that person knows right away that it's the last newsletter the customer will get," says The Lark's Pat Wilhite. "The sticker makes people call up and make reservations right away and say, 'Put me back on your list.' " Wilhite says the newsletter is a lot of work, but it's the only form of advertising the restaurant uses.

It's what every restaurateur dreams of: a steady stream of regular customers. But it takes good food, hard work and promotions aimed at frequent customers to keep bringing them back. ❑

Julie Fintel is a writer in Burke, Virginia.

It makes sense to keep customers

Every restaurateur loves new business. Some owners spend so much time trying to reach new customers that they ignore their current clientele. Here are some ideas for staying in touch with the regulars:

- ☐ Send a handwritten thank-you note to regular customers.
- ☐ As owner or manager, spend at least 30 minutes a day calling different clients just to thank them.
- ☐ Let your employees know who your "best" customers are.
- ☐ Build a file of personal information about customers (including family members' names, awards, honors and interests) and use it to personalize your contacts.
- ☐ Invite clients in to ask for honest responses on how you can improve your business and thereby help them.
- ☐ Volunteer to assist a customer with a civic project of special interest.
- ☐ Offer your facilities "after hours" to a civic organization.
- ☐ Invite special customers to functions such as Christmas parties and retirement celebrations.
- ☐ Make sure that nonhuman elements of your business, such as the telephone system, answering machine and computer, don't frustrate your customer.

—Shelburne Ferguson, Jr.

Shelburne Ferguson, Jr. is an attorney and management consultant in Kingsport, Tennessee.

by Joan E. Herlong

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A COMPLAINT

"There is no such thing as a complaint." This is the service gospel according to Dan Maher, a principal with The TQM (Total Quality Management) Group in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Professor James L. Heskett of Harvard's Graduate School of Business Administration. Maher and Heskett are contributors to a *Harvard Business Review* article entitled "Soothing the Savage Customer" (*Best of Business Quarterly*, Winter 1990/91).

Soothing the "savage" customer is the last thing any restaurateur wants to do. Instead it is better to deal with an "annoyed" or "confused" customer so well that the savagery never develops. Maher and Heskett agreed to share their ideas with ***Restaurants USA*** about anticipating and handling service slip-ups—and even turning complaints to your advantage.

You are quoted as saying, "There is no such thing as a complaint." Most restaurateurs would not agree. Could you explain what you mean?

James Heskett: Complaints are like golden nuggets that supply insight into your business. They are vastly underreported. For every complaint you hear, about five go unheard. A complainer is basically saying, "Give me a reason to come back." The lowest rate of repeat business is among people who never complain.

Dan Maher: In general, people are not forthcoming about raising a complaint. They don't want to be perceived as a pain. I've worked in a lot of different restaurant jobs, and I've learned a complaint is actually information on how to improve your business. In fact, if Mr. Customer leaves without voicing a problem he had with the service, I'm watching about $1,500 walk out the door.

Are you saying that a customer who does not complain costs a restaurateur money?

Maher: Look at it from a marketing perspective. How do you get someone to try your restaurant for the first time? You spend marketing dollars. Once he's in the door, you have to figure the lifetime value of that customer if he comes back, say, once a month.

Let's say he returns about once a month and spends $125 on dinner. Multiply that by 12, and he's worth about $1,500 a year to you. If he leaves without telling you a problem he had with the service—or without having his problem properly addressed—that $1,500 is walking out the door.

You have to think of addressing his complaint as part of your marketing budget—it's not giving away the store. You have to ask, "What does it take to address Mr. Customer's problem and keep that $1,500 from walking out forever?" It makes a lot more sense to spend 80 percent of your marketing budget on keeping the valuable customers you already have and the other 20 percent on bringing in new customers.

What's the smartest way to handle complaints?

Heskett: First of all, when in doubt you should trust your customer. Very few customers cheat, by the way. At least trust them to tell you what the problem is and whether your solution is satisfactory. They have gone to a lot of trouble to tell you in the first place. Trust your employee, as well, to have good judgement in suggesting the kinds of things that will solve the customer's problem.

Maher: It's impossible to institutionalize a response [among servers]. But there are a handful of problems that will account for 80 to 90 percent of your complaints. Gather all your customer-contact people together and ask them: "What are our top five or six causes of customer dissatisfaction?" It is key for them to buy into and help set up whatever system you develop, or it won't work.

Once you've made the first list, make another list of actual responses the waitstaff has used to correct those problems. I'm sure in most restaurants there is no explicit policy, and the answers will be all over the place: "Sam does this, but Mary handles it this other way."

Next, ask, "What should we do?" This gives you a chance to analyze the various responses and how well they worked. Look at this waitstaff training process as an internal marketing investment in customer retention.

For example, if one of the common complaints is the food takes too long to arrive, there are some things you should do. For one, educate the customer. Don't say, "It will be ready in a minute," when it really takes about ten minutes to prepare that dish. Learn about the customer. The food might not be taking very long, but it will seem like a long time to the customer if he's in a hurry to get to the airport. Is the food taking too long? Look at the kitchen process and streamline wherever you can.

Heskett: It is extremely important to empower the front line. The key is to empower your staff to respond to a complaint, but also to train them to anticipate and preempt problems—not just react to whatever comes up.

Two business experts offer ways to turn complainers into repeat customers.

There is an implicit guarantee of customer satisfaction in a restaurant. We expect to have a pleasant dining experience when we go out to dinner. Make sure all employees know that no customer will leave dissatisfied. This builds customer and employee retention because of the favorable work environment it fosters.

Besides, the customer does not want to wait while the server finds someone to fix the problem. That just gives the person time to get more upset. The customer's time is valuable and you don't want to tax that with aggravation. If you don't empower the waitstaff—those on the firing line—to react to a complaint immediately, then you risk several compounding problems.

Arguing with a guest about anything is a classic mistake. You cannot win the argument.

If the server has to get a manager to address the problem, he or she has to repeat the details in front of the customer, as well as other parties. That takes time. If he or she doesn't relate the problem just exactly the way the customer views it, a debate could possibly ensue. Arguing with a guest about anything is a classic mistake. You cannot win the argument, and you also alienate other customers within hearing distance. Even the tone of voice used in handling the situation is important. It could imply "We'll fix it, but the customer is wrong." The customer may then be mollified, but won't be satisfied.

What is the best way to win back the customer when there has been a service slip-up?

Heskett: There are all kinds of options from a free drink or dessert all the way up to giving the customer a free meal. But the best I've ever heard was that if—for any reason—the customer was unhappy, the restaurant would refund their money plus an equal amount to pick one of their competitors and "Have a meal on us." Remember, the service experiences customers rave about most are those when the problem was obviously the customer's fault, but the company responded anyway.

Maher: There is a man named Phil Bressler who is Mr. Customer Satisfaction. At one time, he owned about 18 Domino's Pizza franchises in Baltimore, with good and bad locations. In the late 1980s, his Domino's stores were making two and a half times the revenue and twice the profit of the average Domino's. This is not necessarily because of product, but because of service quality.

One time Phil was a guest lecturer at the Harvard Business School. He was there to reveal the secret of his success, and the class was packed. He explained one of the things he did was to have radio spots ready to go whenever it snowed in Baltimore. Snow just paralyzes Baltimore. He did the spots himself, saying something like, "Hi, I'm Phil Bressler of Domino's Pizza here in Baltimore. You know about our guarantee: You get your pizza delivered in 30 minutes or less, or it's FREE. [He never did switch to taking $3 off, like other Domino's franchises.] Well, as you can see, it's snowing outside right now, and there's no way we can get you your pizza in 30 minutes in this kind of weather. So call now for your free pizza."

He'd end up giving away 300 to 400 pizzas every time it snowed. Everybody in the class was stunned, like "Is this guy crazy?" But are those 400 people who got free pizzas going to go anywhere else when a company honors a guarantee like that? And what about all the hundreds of people who did get their pizzas in 30 minutes or less, even though it was snowing? Do you think they'll go any place else after service like that?

Should a restaurant go beyond creating an atmosphere in which complaints are welcome? Should operators actually seek out complaints?

Heskett: Absolutely. You should make it as easy as possible for customers to complain. If you can afford it, install an 800 number. One of the best ideas I've ever heard of was at the Maine Savings Bank. They paid customers $1 for every letter of complaint received.

If a restaurant can somehow obtain the name, address and phone number of guests, it is a very good idea to contact the guests later to make sure they had a pleasant experience. It is vital, however, that whoever makes the call—the maitre d' or the manager or whoever—has the latitude to immediately respond to and remedy any complaints that arise in these follow-up calls.

The lowest rate of repeat business is among people who never complain.

Maher: Eliciting comments is always a good idea. But you've got to make it as simple as possible for the customer. It's easy to yak; it's difficult to sit down and write. Customer-response cards aren't much of an idea, unless perhaps you ask for the customer's card and also ask, "May we call you?"

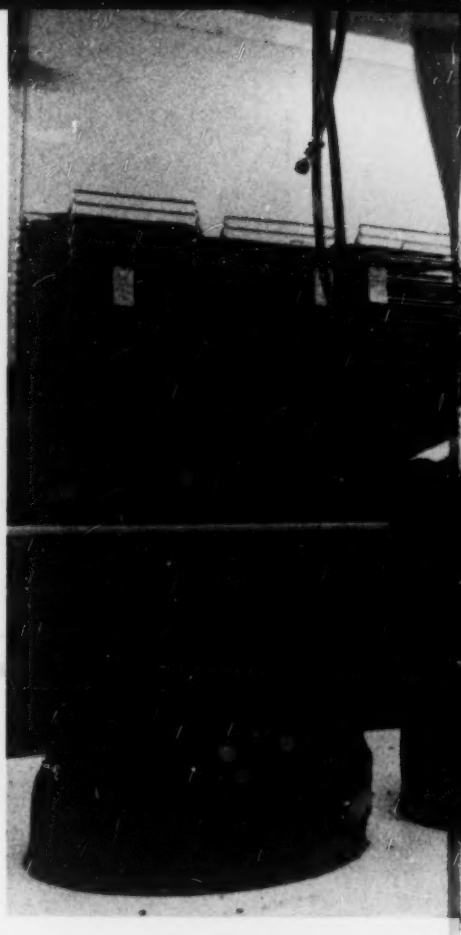
If you have someone call, make sure it is someone nonthreatening—maybe the kitchen manager or someone the customer would not have seen during the visit. Don't approach it from the angle of, "We understand you had a problem here the other evening." Simply say, "We are calling to ask about your dinner with us. How was your service? What did you think overall?"

Personal follow-up can work if it's done right, but it doesn't have to be limited to first-time guests. Say I've eaten some place four times, but this one little thing has always bothered me. If it happens the fifth time, I'm gone. But if someone actually called me up and invited me to talk about that one little thing, I would almost feel in partnership with that person. I'm a customer for life. ❑

Joan E. Herlong is a writer in Greenville, South Carolina.

OPERATORS ACCOMMODATE DISABLED WORKERS

This is the first in a two-part series on how some operators are making their restaurants accessible to people with disabilities. In this article, operators share their experiences in adapting their establishments for employees with disabilities. A future article will discuss accommodating customers with disabilities.



Getting Ready for the ADA

by Jennifer Batty

Beginning in July 1992, the employment regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will go into effect. The purpose of the regulations is to make it easier for those with disabilities to find jobs and to advance in the workplace.

One of the sections of the ADA that will have the greatest impact on foodservice operators is Title I, which prohibits job discrimination against a person because of a disability. On July 26, 1992, the ADA employment regulations covering businesses with 25 or more employees go into effect. Two years later, on July 26, 1994, the employment regulations for businesses with 15 to 24 employees take effect.

But some foodservice operators have chosen to write their own rules instead of waiting for the regulations to be cemented. These operators have realized that providing access to as many customers and potential employees as possible is simply good business—ADA deadline or not. Across the country, foodservice operators have tapped into the pool of workers with disabilities and have discovered nontraditional workers to be assets rather than liabilities.

Jobs, plus much more

In 1988 Pizza Hut, Inc., began an ambitious nationwide program to hire 2,000 individuals with physical and mental disabilities over a three-year period. By the end of the first year, those initial placement goals were exceeded by 100 percent. The impetus behind this program was as much labor needs for Pizza Hut as charitable concern, says Steve Zivolich, project director for the Jobs Plus program.

"Pizza Hut was faced with a rapid turnover rate, and the cost of recruiting and training employees was mounting. In the last two years we have hired 2,000 Jobs Plus workers, and most are still in those jobs—in every area in the restaurant that is entry level. Some are being promoted to positions with more responsibility," he says.

Zivolich works with state rehabilitation agencies and supported-employment programs that provide training, employee placement and a job coach who trains the person for the position and remains with the person hired for as long as the Jobs Plus worker needs assistance. Pizza Hut currently employs these workers as dishwashers, buspersons, delivery dispatchers, computer operators, delivery persons, custodians and food preparers.

Most Jobs Plus workers are mentally or developmentally impaired, but there are also workers who are hearing impaired or visually impaired. Some workers have physical disabilities and use wheelchairs. "We have found that these [Jobs Plus] workers have better safety records than nondisabled workers, that they are absent much less and that they are very committed to their jobs," says Zivolich. "Our annual national turnover rate for nondisabled workers is 190 percent. With the supported-employment program, the turnover rate for our Jobs Plus workers is 32 percent. That saves us a lot of money in training and recruitment."

But what about the money Pizza Hut had to dole out to adapt the work environment for the employees with disabilities? "We usually spend less than $50 on adaptations in the units. Adaptations don't always have to cost money. It takes creativity," says Zivolich.

James Katzka works with former Goodwill clients in a Vicom/Baker's Square commissary.

An example of that creative thinking is the solution the Jobs Plus staff found for a worker who made pizzas and did not have the cognitive skills to use scales to measure ingredients. Staff members color-coded the numbers on the scales so the worker could measure the correct amount of pizza toppings by making the weight marker stay within a certain color.

A common adaptation, says Zivolich, is adjusting work schedules. Many of the workers who are developmentally or mentally impaired live in group homes with resident counselors. These group homes often have set hours when the residents must be in the house. Also, most of these workers rely on public transportation and often do not want to travel at night. To accommodate a Jobs Plus custodial worker, Pizza Hut might alter the normal cleaning schedule from after closing at night to the early morning before opening.

Job restructuring is also a common adaptation. "We look at a person's assets, and although he may not meet the total job description in the functions he can perform, he can do some parts well. So we split the duties of that job and let him do what he can do well. Then we let another worker handle the other part," Zivolich says.

Phones have been lowered and counters altered for workers in wheelchairs so the employees could take delivery orders. The computers at the customer-service center have talking screens for the employees who are visually impaired.

In an Everett, Washington, Pizza Hut restaurant, Braille labels were installed on the salad bar, and notches were cut in the salad dressing ladles to accommodate Debra Curry, a Jobs Plus employee who is blind and deaf. Curry preps the salad bar for the lunch crowd. By working with the Washington State Vocational Services agency, Jobs Plus was able to secure a teletouch machine that works like a typewriter but produces Braille symbols for Curry to read. This enables her to communicate with her coworkers. Because they worked through a state rehabilitation agency, Pizza Hut did not have to pay for the teletouch machine.

Don Lynch, a Pizza Hut restaurant manager, has been in charge of the Jobs Plus program in the Minnesota and Iowa area for a year and a half. In his Clear Lake, Iowa, store are six workers who have Down syndrome or are mentally retarded. The only modifications he has had to make are altering job descriptions to match the workers' skill levels. "These workers are committed to jobs that some of us would consider menial, but they take great pride in doing their best," says Lynch. "They get increased self-esteem, and we get dedicated employees."

Zivolich and Lynch both stress that staff members must be included in the decision-making process when hiring a worker with disabilities. Pizza Hut has a mentor program that provides training to store managers and staff before a Jobs Plus employee joins their unit. "I call it learning to manage diversity," says Zivolich. "It is a matter of making an overall commitment to managing this sort of program and not just shooting from the hip."

Communication is one of the vital links of this program, and Lynch is attempting to strengthen the lines of communication among Pizza Hut managers. He began a newsletter called *Jobs Plus: News to Use*, that is mailed out to other Pizza Hut manag-

William Moore, Jr., who was born deaf and is unable to speak, found his first job as a Pizza Hut delivery driver in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1987. Moore communicates with written notes and hand signals.

ers and corporate staff. It contains tips on implementing the Jobs Plus program smoothly into a unit. The newsletter also lists duties that could be assigned to Jobs Plus workers and talks about important legislative issues such as the ADA. Lynch envisions the newsletter expanding so that information on accommodating workers with disabilities could be shared among industry professionals nationally and not just internally.

Although Lynch says that he is very supportive of the ADA and wants "the restaurants I'm working with to be on the cutting edge as far as accommodating those with disabilities," the somewhat vague regulations trouble him. One of Lynch's concerns about the ADA is shared by many other foodservice professionals: With the high rate of turnover in the foodservice industry, what happens if an operator makes a $300 modification to a store for a worker with a disability, and then the worker leaves after a couple of months? Lynch hopes that such possibilities will be taken into consideration by federal regulators when ruling on possible discrimination cases.

Zivolich points out that some legislation already benefits the operator who hires those with disabilities—like the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC). "Over the last two years, we have gotten $4.5 million in tax credits. This program provides the largest percentage of TJTC for Pizza Hut," he says.

Pizza Hut's success at recruiting, training and employing persons with disabilities will be acknowledged with an award presented at the National Restaurant Association Show.

Employer goodwill

James Caputo, plant manager at Vicom/Baker's Square Commissary in West Allis, Wisconsin, was "real reluctant" when first approached by Goodwill Industries about hiring workers with disabilities. He admits, "I didn't think they could do assembly-line work."

Goodwill convinced him to give an individual who has Down syndrome a try. The candidate came in and made boxes for the pies produced by the plant for Baker's Square Restaurants and other hotels, restaurants and theme parks. That first Goodwill employee did such a good job that Caputo hired more and more, until 65 percent of the plant's workers were supplied by Goodwill.

"These are some of the best employees I've ever had. They have kept the turnover down, and they are so dependable. They will go through four feet of snow to get here when other employees call from two blocks away and say they can't make it," says Caputo.

Cheryl Axford, program manager for community employment and supported employment, says Goodwill will work with an employer to find the right candidate for a job, help train the person and provide on-site job coaching for as long as needed. "Goodwill has a foodservice training program where our clients learn food prep from A to Z," says Axford.

The foodservice industry is a good place for persons who are developmentally or mentally impaired to work, says Axford, because "the tasks are very repetitive. These people thrive on repetition. Such tasks are not stressful for the individual because they don't ask for great mental demands."

Adaptations to the work environment for these employees have been minor so far, says Axford. Sometimes an individual must stand on a box because he or she is too short. One woman needed brooms, buckets and mops scaled down to match her size. But most often, it is a matter of work-

Employers' responsibilities under the ADA

The central focus of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is to protect disabled individuals from discrimination in employment. As stated in the act itself, "It is the purpose of this Act to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities." This is accomplished by requiring employers to focus on the qualifications of a person with a disability rather than focusing on the disability itself. For example, an employer may ask an applicant about his or her ability to "perform job-related functions." However, an employer may *not* ask an applicant about the existence, nature or severity of a disability. The ADA also places restrictions on the use of medical examinations used in the screening process.

The other major obligation imposed on employers under the ADA is the duty to make "reasonable accommodations" for individuals with disabilities. Unless an employer can show it

ing out transportation options and work schedules.

Caputo has hired persons with hearing impairments, developmental disabilities and mental impairments, and he has also hired people with disadvantaged backgrounds.

Adaptations made to accommodate the Goodwill workers include getting a clipboard with an attached calculator for a worker who cannot do simple mathematics, putting flashing lights above the oven to alert a hearing-impaired worker that the timer is going off, and adding a shift for workers who can only work for limited amounts of time.

If Goodwill finds a client who is a candidate for employment at the plant, the staff sends him or her for an interview with Caputo and his assistant plant manager, James Katzka. The managers speak with a job coach about the person's disability. Together they try to place him or her in an appropriate job. "We try to determine what a person does best, and then we place the person in a job that offers the best chance for success. We have an overall standard here that we are not going to sacrifice. You have to know their limitations and allow for that," says Katzka.

When nondisabled workers begin jobs at the plant, Caputo says, "We tell them straight up that we have these people here [disabled or disadvantaged workers], and we want their support." If the nondisabled workers don't support the program, Caputo says "they won't be Vicom employees very long."

For a man who was once a reluctant participant in this program, Caputo is now its greatest champion. "When other managers ask me why I hire so many people with disabilities, I tell them to consider how they would feel if they were hit by a car and had brain damage and couldn't find a job. Any of us could end up in that situation," he says.

Part of the corporate culture

After taking part in the 1987 International Special Olympics summer games, staff members of Red Lobster restaurants were discussing how much they enjoyed working with the special athletes. "We asked ourselves why we had to wait four years to work with these people again. That's when we decided to start a formal program for hiring those with disabilities," says Dick Monroe, vice president of public relations for Red Lobster, part of General Mills Restaurants, Inc.

Today, there are between 1,000 and 1,500 persons with disabilities working in Red Lobster restaurants. When Red Lobster launched the program, the company worked with the Logan rehabilitation agency, which provided expertise in how to develop training guidelines, served as counsel to unit managers and provided job coaches to work with the employees

would result in an "undue hardship," he or she must make accommodations for the disability of an employee who can perform the "essential functions" of the position. For example, a telephone can be readily adapted for someone unable to use his or her hands. Generally, an accommodation will be deemed reasonable (and not an undue hardship) as long as it is not too difficult or expensive to accomplish. This is measured relative to the nature and resources of the employer's business.

The ADA is like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in that the prohibitions against discrimination in employment apply to the full range of employment practices. That is, an employer may not discriminate against a qualified individual with a disability in regard to application procedures, hiring, promotions, training opportunities, termination or rates of compensation. Specific personnel practices that are prohibited include utilizing screening methods which discriminate against the disabled, using non-job-related criteria which eliminate disabled individuals, utilizing inappropriate test instruments (e.g., giving a written test to a blind person), and failing to make a "reasonable accommodation" in the absence of "undue hardship."

Beginning July 26, 1992, the provisions in the ADA applying to employment will apply only to employers with 25 or more employees. However, this will be expanded to include employers with as few as 15 employees starting in July 1994.

The ADA does not consider an employee or applicant currently using illegal drugs to be a "qualified individual with a disability." Consequently, an employer is not prohibited from taking appropriate action against such individuals. Furthermore, the ADA permits employers to hold alcoholics and those using illegal drugs to the same performance standards as other employees.

The ADA does not address the issue of drug testing in the workplace other than to specify that a test administered for the purpose of determining illegal drug use "shall not be considered a medical examination" as defined under the ADA.

The protection afforded alcoholics and illegal drug users focuses on individuals who have completed or are participating in rehabilitation programs. Employers cannot take action against such individuals unless their job performance is not up to standards or they continue to use illegal drugs.

There are a number of steps employers can take to bring their personnel procedures and policies into compliance with the ADA. The following is a sample of such steps:

- ☐ Review application forms and interviewing procedures.
- ☐ Review the use of medical examinations.
- ☐ Review employment screening tests.
- ☐ Determine whether any current employees are entitled to a "reasonable accommodation."
- ☐ Provide training for all appropriate supervisory personnel to ensure that they are fully aware of their legal responsibilities under the ADA.

As with any review of personnel matters, this should be undertaken in consultation with a qualified labor attorney and human-resources professionals.

—Linda K. Enghagen, J.D.

Linda K. Enghagen is an assistant professor in the Department of Hotel, Restaurant, and Travel Administration at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

with disabilities. "We knew that there was going to be the normal amount of concern when we introduced this program to the managers. So with the help of the rehab agency, we put together a videotape that we showed to our managers to put them more at ease," says Monroe.

The tape showed interviews with managers and employees who had worked with persons with disabilities through their own independent hiring. The message, says Monroe, was that it was normal to be wary of this new working relationship but for the managers to give these new employees a chance.

Monroe hopes that "reason will prevail in the writing of the ADA rules" regarding accommodating employees with disabilities. "This is going to take a lot of sincerity and common sense. It would not be reasonable to expect a person in a wheelchair to be employed as a server," says Monroe. Many [foodservice] groups have done a lot to hire those with disabilities without having to be told to do it. You shouldn't force people to make excessive changes," he says. "But the majority of our employees support [Red Lobster's] program. It is part of our corporate culture now, like running good cost control."

No other job would do

In 1988, Ernest McGee, Jr. began working as a chef at The Sagamore Hotel in Bolton Landing, New York. "I was what's known as a 'jammer' in the kitchen. I got things done," says McGee. But in 1989, McGee was in an automobile accident that resulted in paralysis from the waist down. McGee says one of his first thoughts after learning he was a paraplegic was "that I wouldn't be able to do what I'd been doing all my life. I'd been in foodservice since I was 14. I tried to think of other jobs I could do, because I didn't know if I had the stamina to do this [be a chef] 365 days a year with all the long hours. But I

Try to see it our way

Judy Hoit is a polio survivor who uses a wheelchair to get around at home and in the workplace. Currently employed at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, she agreed to share with ***Restaurants USA*** *some practical ideas about making accommodations in the workplace for employees with disabilities.*

Have you ever wanted to hire a disabled person or wanted your business to be accessible, but didn't know how to go about it? Now, with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, you may have an additional motivation to make your business accessible. With 40 years of experience in a wheelchair, having raised two children and having worked full-time for the past 15 years, I have a few suggestions.

As an employer, you need to realize that each disabled person is an individual. The wheels of a wheelchair are no different from the wheels of your auto. The person driving is a human being with desires and ambitions, just like you. They have families, homes, personal needs and feelings.

As an employer or business owner, you need offices and buildings which are accessible. First, you need parking spaces designated by the wheelchair symbol for use by drivers who are disabled, curb cuts, and doors you can get into (automatic doors or doors with automatic buttons). Inside, you need floor coverings that are easy to rotate on (no thick carpets), work stations with space to move around in, copying machines at a workable level for a person sitting in a wheelchair (sometimes just removing casters on a machine cabinet can make it accessible), files placed in lower drawers so they are reachable and computer keyboards that are functional to the disabled employee. Telephones with headsets are an option, as are phones with speed dialing so that frequently dialed numbers only require that one button be pushed instead of many. Having an office with a water fountain that is reachable to a person in a chair is great. If it can't be changed, how about reachable cups placed alongside the older units? Many adaptations like this are easy to provide with a little forethought.

Bathrooms must be accessible, with doors wide enough for wheelchairs to get through and doors that are easy to open. This only requires that the door's closure unit be adjusted to open easily for individuals with limited strength or that the closure apparatus be removed completely. Bathrooms should have at least one stall with a wider door so that chairs can go inside and the door will close. I've been in some restrooms where I could get in the stall but had no room to position my chair or where I couldn't shut the stall door.

I also prefer slide locks on stall doors, rather than turn locks. Some have magnet locks, which are fine if you have a slide lock for a backup. I have a tendency to position my chair against the door, and too often the magnet lock will come undone with any pressure against the door, which can be an unexpected surprise for everyone. I also like to see the international wheelchair symbol on the inside and outside of stall doors. People often use the handicapped stall because it's bigger, but as a person who can use only this stall, it is frustrating to have to wait when the other stall is empty and the situation is desperate.

Stalls should be equipped with two or three handrails, but problems arise when rails are placed too close to a heating element or to the toilet-paper dispensers. Dispensers also need to be close enough to the stool for the user to reach. Remember that some individuals have a limited reach. Sanitary napkin dispensers and receptacles should also be positioned on the walls so that a person in a wheelchair is able to reach them.

Judy Holt

knew I wouldn't be happy doing anything else," says McGee.

McGee entered rehabilitation therapy and strove to master skills he would need to resume his craft. He also began working with Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) on securing adaptive equipment to help him return to work.

Vicki Starr, a vocational rehabilitation counselor at VESID, spoke with the management at The Sagamore about McGee's chances of returning to his chef's position there. "I told them we could purchase a Moto-Stand for him, which is similar to a wheelchair, but it helps the paralyzed person stand up and move around. It wasn't a cost to the restaurant to purchase the equipment," says Starr.

McGee says Starr met with The Sagamore chefs and general managers and assured them that he could still do the job. "She pointed out that they didn't have me there in the beginning to stand and run around, but to create. And I could still create—I created through my hands and mind before and I could still do that," he says.

"Now the quantity of my work may have gone down, but the quality has gone up. I take on projects that I know I can do my best on in the time frame given—I've learned how to delegate more."

The pair didn't have to work too hard to convince The Sagamore staff, who wanted McGee back from the beginning. "Our initial feeling was that we would do anything we could to get him back. He was a very valuable employee, and we didn't want to lose him," recalls Lilian LaPrairie, personnel manager at The Sagamore.

There was some apprehension at the corporate level about McGee's safety and about insurance liability when he was using the Moto-Stand. But after witnessing McGee's skillful handling of the equipment, LaPrairie wrote a memo to corporate headquarters, and they agreed to let McGee return to the kitchen.

Adaptations to make the hotel accessible for McGee were minimal, because The Sagamore's sprawling operation already had a series of ramps and freight elevators for transporting large shipments to and from the hotel. McGee says he can make his way through the hotel in both his wheelchair and Moto-Stand. In the kitchen, the engineering staff drilled holes into the metal working tables so that McGee can hook his transport belt (which wraps around his waist) into the holes and stand with the aid of leg braces when not in the Moto-Stand. A bathroom was also remodeled so that McGee would have access to it in his wheelchair.

"The costs for adaptations were absolutely worthwhile. We are very glad to have Ernest back. We never thought his disability would hamper his abilities as a chef, and we are very pleased with his work since his return," says LaPrairie.

McGee says he feels very fortunate that he has been able to continue to pursue the career he loves. He knows others who have not been so fortunate. "I've met other people who had active, demanding jobs that they can't return to because of their disability," he says. "I'm very happy to be back in the kitchen. I've always wanted to be an executive chef someday, and I knew that it would be difficult. It's going to be even more difficult now, but I'm still going to try." ❑

Jennifer Batty is a communications specialist at the National Restaurant Association.

Faucets need to be easy to use. The one-handled faucet is probably the easiest. Those designed to save water, where you hold the faucet down in order to make the water run, are a disaster. There is no way a disabled person can hold the water on, use soap and rinse his or her hands at the same time. Plus, you get soap on your hands and can't rinse the water off and so you keep putting your soapy hands on the faucet. I'm not sure even an able-bodied person can handle those faucets well. In addition, soap dispensers should be located close to the sink.

After washing your hands, drying them can also be a challenge. Some restrooms have paper-towel dispensers. Once again, they need to be low enough to be easily reached. Also, a towel dispenser should be positioned so a wheelchair can get up to it. A common obstacle is a wastebasket placed under the dispenser or close by. Blow dryers are often the easiest to use, as long as there is clearance underneath so that a person in a wheelchair can make use of them.

A mirror low enough to see yourself is a luxury. Many bathrooms have nice mirrors, but they are for people who are standing. I would think any innovative employer could place an additional mirror beside or below the existing mirror to accommodate a wheelchair user.

Bathroom floors are usually tile. The only problem with tile floors is when slick wax is used. My worst fear is a slick floor and the thought of having to be rescued. Please use nonslick wax.

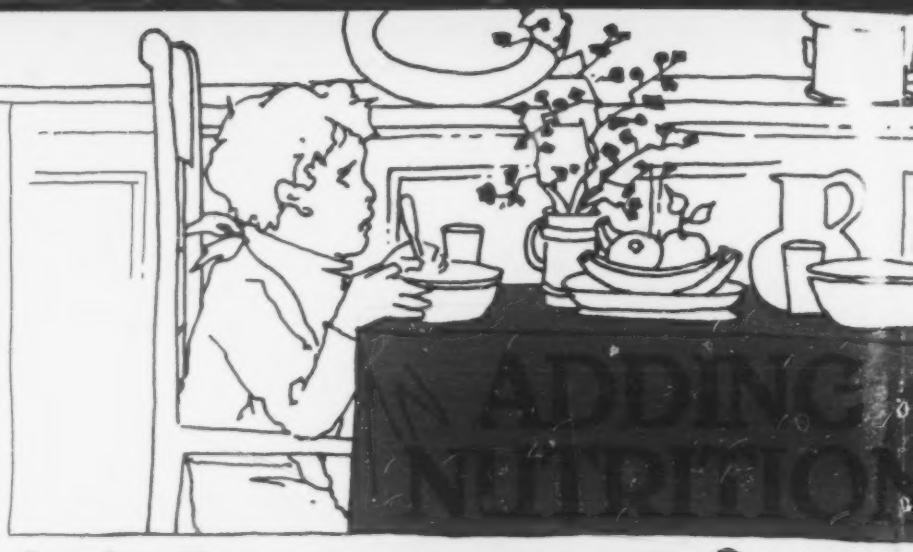
Another suggestion is a coatrack or coat tree with a hook positioned low so that employees and patrons who use wheelchairs can hang up their coats. Once again, this need not be a major project. You can weld or bolt a lower hook to a metal coat tree as an option.

Last, but not least, door handles should be used instead of doorknobs. Some manufacturers make very smooth, round doorknobs. They are pretty, but they should not be put on public bathroom doors, where they cause problems for older people as well as for people with disabilities.

These are only a few ideas that an employer can use to accommodate employees with disabilities. You need not be afraid to hire a disabled person. Any modifications you make will prove to be assets when you find how valuable this individual is to your work force, and many modifications benefit your customers as well. Just remember that disabled people are individuals, and ask for input from them, since they know what works best for their own needs. As an employed person with a disability, I know that when I job-hunt, the duties of the job are only one of the things I look at. I also look for a workable job site with a bathroom I can use and a building I can get into each morning.

Most disabled people are eager to work, and research shows they make top-notch employees. If you make your business accessible, you will make all disabled people feel welcome, and you may just end up with a valuable employee as well.

—Judy Hoit



TO KIDS' M

by Diane Welland, M.S. R.D.

More than ever, children are dining out in restaurants—with their families, of course. This influx of children into the restaurant scene has not been lost on restaurant operators. Children's selections on menus have increased, and many restaurants now offer kids a special menu.

But not all menus for children take nutrition into account, and many parents seem more intent on pacifying children in restaurants than on feeding them properly. The next wave of concern among parents may well be about nutrition in restaurants, as parents begin to ask themselves, "Are our kids eating well when we go out to eat?"

Meeting children's needs

A growing number of experts agree that children over two years of age should consume a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables, just as adults should. The National Cholesterol Education Program Panel recently released a report supporting this fact.

This idea may come as a surprise to many parents and restaurateurs. Studies show that the items most frequently ordered for children in restaurants are soft drinks, french fries, hamburgers, pizza and fried chicken, in that order. The fact that there is a growing number of children with high cholesterol signifies that fat is an area many parents need to be concerned about. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children over two years of age consume a balanced diet with no more than 30 percent of calories from fat. Adequate calories and other important nutrients that children need can easily be provided on this lower-fat diet.

"Most of the parents I see are worried that their kids aren't getting enough protein," says Ann Litt, a private-practice nutritionist in the Washington DC area who specializes in children's nutrition. "But most kids get all the protein they need easily," she says.

In the book *How To Get Your Kid to Eat . . . But Not Too Much*, author and children's nutritionist Ellyn Satter outlines the recommended daily food pattern for children ages two through ten. She points out that children actually need about half the protein that an adult does, and she emphasizes reducing excessive fat in the diet. According to Satter, a typical nutritious diet for children should include 2 cups of milk, 2 to 3 ounces of protein, 4 servings of bread and cereals, and 4 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Serving sizes should be smaller than adult portions.

About kids' food

Aside from different nutritional requirements, kids' tastes can vary considerably from those of an adult. "Kids eat foods that are familiar to them," says Satter. "That's why one of the most important things parents should teach their children is to learn to eat a variety of foods. But the parent should not put pressure on the child to eat." The more foods the child is exposed to, the broader the child's range of food acceptance will be.

Still, even children who are exposed to a wide variety of foods have their quirks. According to Ann Litt, it is not so much that children do not like spicy foods, but that children do not seem to like foods that are mixed together. Indeed, mixtures such as casseroles and stews may not be popular among the kid set. "Children also tend to be finicky about how foods are presented, and mixtures are not usually that appealing to children," says Litt. That is one reason why the Silver Diner in Rockville, Maryland, serves its children's entrees with sauces or gravies on the side. "We've found that children don't like sauces on their food," says manager Darryl McKinney. The Silver Diner's children's entree of hot turkey and mashed potatoes is always served with the gravy on the side.

Texture is another strong factor when it comes to marketing restaurant food to children. Satter's book says that until the age of eight or nine a child is not adept at chewing and swallowing.

Both Satter and Litt recommend serving meats that are cut in small pieces, such as shredded chicken and hamburger. "Fish has a great texture for children," says Litt, "and it's an excellent food as well." Restaurants would also do well to serve moist, tender meat that is easy to chew.

Improving kids' menus

There are many ways to offer healthful items on a children's menu. The trick is in pleasing both the parents and the child. Many times, the restaurateur merely has to expand an existing children's menu by adding some healthful items. Here are some ideas to keep in mind when developing a more healthy children's menu.

Offer nutritious choices. Soups and salads are sometimes excluded from children's menus. But at Zoopa in Seattle, soups and salads are all that is on the menu. According to Craig Russell, senior general manager of Zoopa, the help-yourself soup, salad and pasta bar caters to families. "About 40 percent of our customers fall into the family category," says

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Russell. "The kids get to pick and choose what they want to eat, and they love it." Zoopa offers many fresh fruits and vegetables, and children under 5 years of age eat free, and older children eat for half price.

Pasta is another sure winner to include on a kids' menu. Loaded with carbohydrates and low in fat, spaghetti with tomato sauce is an excellent high-energy food and an old standby that can be found on almost all children's menus. "The pasta bar is the most popular station among the children," notes Russell. "They particularly like the macaroni with different shapes, like rotini and shells."

Expanding children's choices on menus can be an important marketing tool. Along with regular kids' meals, the children's menu at the Boca Raton Resort & Club in Boca Raton, Florida, offers soup, a house salad, a fruit and cottage cheese platter, and (of course) peanut butter and jelly. The variety of children's items the club offers helps to encourage families to visit.

Another option for foodservice operators who wish to increase their healthy choices for children is to modify traditional kids' food. Using ground turkey instead of ground beef and serving broiled fish instead of fish sticks are two changes that are easy to make. At the Disney-run fast food outlet Mickey's Kitchen, good nutrition is a priority. Located in a shopping mall in Montclair, California, Mickey's Kitchen offers children's items such as meatless Mickey burgers, turkey dogs and chicken salad. The festive Disney atmosphere further enhances the children's appeal.

Include healthy garnishes and accompaniments. Wholesome garnishes represent an easy way to put nutrition on the plate. Celery and carrot sticks are excellent garnishes, and many kids like the crunchy texture. Side dishes are another way to balance out a meal. Instead of serving french fries or potato chips, The Inn at Glen Echo, in Glen Echo, Maryland, serves each children's meal with toasted blue cornmeal chips and a piece of fresh fruit. "The children like the fruit because it is sweet and juicy. The parents like it because the kids are eating fruit," says general manager Buddy Goetzger.

Hurst touts healthy kids' menus

Nutrition on children's menus was a topic of discussion at the recent International Food Media Conference held in Dallas in February. National Restaurant Association President Michael Hurst addressed an audience of 100 food editors and reporters on the subject.

Although more than half of restaurants offer special menus for children and many feature healthy items, Hurst pointed to studies which show that parents often pass up nutritious offerings when ordering for kids. "The majority of fast food chains are offering healthful options, and one chain even has celery and carrot sticks in packets—an excellent finger food for children," noted Hurst. "These items are available, but parents are not ordering them for their children.

"I would guess that a similar situation exists in tableservice restaurants," continued Hurst. "The parent orders a hamburger or french fries for the child because the food is familiar and the child will eat it without a fuss."

Hurst went on to propose that restaurateurs, parents, health organizations and the news media team up to promote healthy restaurant dining for children. "First, we must educate parents about the importance of a low-fat, high-fiber diet for children," said Hurst. "Then we must develop new, healthful menu items with immediate appeal for children. There is room here for considerable cooperative effort," Hurst told the audience.

Serve finger foods. Children like to use their hands when they eat, and they frequently pick up food with their fingers. Bite-sized foods like cheese sticks, whole grain breads and crackers can be easily handled by kids.

Serve a complete meal. According to Satter's book, a typical children's meal should include the following: protein such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs or beans; bread or cereal; fruit or vegetable (or both); and milk or cheese. At the Samurai Japanese Steak, Seafood & Sushi Bar in Washington DC, the children's entree comes with chicken or steak, oriental vegetables, steamed rice, and a soup or salad. Fruit juices are readily available and provide a good source of vitamins A and C.

Serve child-sized portions of adult meals. This may be one of the simplest and most overlooked ways to add children's entrees to a menu. Because the item is already on the menu, there is no extra preparation involved. At the same time, the child does not have to feel different or left out, because he or she can eat the same as the "grown-ups" do. Smaller versions of adult entrees often warrant only a slight change. On its regular menu, The Inn at Glen Echo serves a chicken tarragon entree which appears as a sandwich version on the children's menu.

Make it fun. If children are going to be a part of your clientele, the best way to keep this group happy is to make eating enjoyable. Most restaurants give children crayons, coloring books or games to play while waiting. The Ritz-Carlton in Houston even goes so far as to give each child under 12 a toy.

An exciting place for children to go to is the Samurai Japanese Steak, Seafood & Sushi Bar. At this restaurant, Japanese chefs put on a show for children as they prepare food in front of them. Master chefs twirl knives and slice food, and servers are dressed in traditional Japanese clothes. The show is such a hit that many schools bring their classes in regularly for lunch. It is all part of making a child's meal both an enjoyable and nutritious event. ❑

Diane Welland is manager/staff nutritionist at the National Restaurant Association.

THE 1991 GREAT

DESIGN, MERCHANDISI

by Jennifer Batty

By the time the final judging for the National Restaurant Association's 28th annual Great Menu Contest rolled around, one staff member's office had been usurped by box upon box of menus. Tucked away in those boxes were almost 600 menus from every corner of the United States as well as from abroad.

One menu was printed on a regulation football (tee included), another was glued to a green woven fan, and another menu was tucked away in the center of a novel. Menus were adorned with photographs or drawings of such things as pigs in bow ties, a surfing carrot, ancient Hawaiian kings and a smug-looking gopher.

On March 12 the menus were carted into a conference room at the association's Washington DC headquarters and placed before six menu-savvy judges. The judges represented food industry publications, newspapers and design firms, and all had earned their stripes as Great Menu Contest judges in previous years.

Menus entered in the Great Menu Contest were judged on design, merchandising power and imagination. Each judge brought his or her own expertise to the judging. "Impact is important," said judge Michael Bartlett, editor-in-chief of *Restaurants & Institutions*. "There should be integration between the art and the descriptions to create an overall impression. The menu should be memorable—like the food in the restaurant."

Mark Knauer of the design firm Knauer Incorporated in Highland Park, Illinois, said, "First and foremost there has to be something distinctive about the menu. And second, it has to be appropriate for the operation. You should be able to get a feel for the concept from the menu, if it is thoroughly conceived."

As the menus passed from hand to hand, the judges joked with each other about the occasional incorrect spelling of menu items and one menu that unfolded to the size of a pup tent. Within each of nine categories, the three highest-scoring menus were chosen as winners. Judges often retrieved menus with lower scores to debate their merits and then recast their votes.

The winners within each category were then considered for the three grand-prize slots. After much debate the top winners were chosen.

One entry that demonstrated a great deal of research was that of the first grand prize winner: China Coast Restaurants, operated by General Mills Restaurants, Inc., of Orlando, Florida. "It was the clearest Chinese restaurant menu I've ever seen in my life," said contest judge Jann Malone, food editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. "The menu did an excellent job of educating mainstream America about Chinese cuisine by linking the various cuisines with the regions they came from on a map—and the menu explained the differences in cooking style."

The second-place grand prize winner was Ellington's room-service menu from Embassy Suites Hotel North in Indianapolis. The menu had a triangular design that allowed it to stand up beside a telephone or on top of the TV in a guest's hotel room. "That menu was a favorite from the minute I saw it," said contest judge Scott Allmendinger, editor of *Restaurant Business* magazine. "It solves a very basic problem of how to entice people to order room service. Most room-service menus are heavy, leather-bound jobs hidden in a drawer in the room. This menu stood up and had the room-service number on each page. It was brightly colored and had clever graphics. It sold the product in a simple yet effective manner."

Jann Malone also thought Ellington's menu had great merit. "As a woman who travels frequently, I rely a lot on room service and I appreciated that this wasn't a 200-page notebook telling you everything available in the hotel and how to order a limo.

MENU CONTEST

G POWER & IMAGINATION

That's not what I need to know. This got right to the point," she said.

A sturdy menu with a distinctive design won third grand prize. Boogies Diner, headquartered in Joppa, Maryland, entered a menu designed like a jukebox, with metal binders holding the pages in the center like music selections are displayed in a jukebox. "Boogies' menu was clever, and it made ordering a meal as easy as punching up a number on the jukebox," said Rob Kasper of the *Baltimore Sun*.

Allmendinger said, "Boogies' menu looked like it would stand up to wear and tear. People who go to a place like that would be inclined to fiddle with things like they would with a jukebox. But in this case, the restaurant is making $5 or $6 on menu selections instead of 25 cents on jukebox selections."

Most of the judges agreed that this year's entries were of better quality than those entered in previous years. Some judges expressed surprise that such strong entries were found in the Average Check $8–$15 Per Person category. "The $8–$15 category was exceptional this year," said Knauer. "I think it's indicative of what's happening in the industry with the growth of more casual, midscale operations. The $8–$15 market is very competitive, but they don't take themselves as seriously as the upscale segment. So they have more room to have fun when designing their menus."

Another surprise was noted by judge Scott Allmendinger. "We were all braced to have every single heart-healthy item highlighted," said Allmendinger, knowing that restaurant operators are trying to win over health-conscious diners. "But these menus did a good job of subtly pinpointing these items, as well as marking new menu items, chef recommendations, spicy items or quick entrees. That is good merchandising."

The judges, of course, also brought their own pet peeves and subjective opinions about menus. They disagreed over what was more important: visual impact or well-written copy. "A menu has to have aesthetic

appeal—something different and creative about it," said designer Knauer. One menu that he thought combined visual elements in a sophisticated and effective way was that of Leona's Restaurants in Chicago, which placed third in the $8–$15 category. "It presented the products differently from any other menu I saw. It had photos, descriptions and illustrations, and they all worked together in a pleasing way."

For Rob Kasper the criteria was pretty simple. "Basically, I expected each menu to make me hungry. I looked carefully at the copy—graphics are secondary."

Malone, too, remarked on the importance of the menu copy. "I was impressed by menus that told a story about the food being sold at that restaurant. I look at a menu for information, and I dislike it when the type is too small or when the graphics interfere with the words and you have to struggle to make out the entree description," she said.

Readability often tipped the scales for entries during the judging. If judges had to lean back in their chairs and stretch the menu to arm's length or whisk their glasses off and squint at the type, then the entry was in trouble. After squinting at several menus, Gary Turner of G.B. Decorative Design Company, Inc., in Alexandria, Virginia, said, "I have often been confronted with situations where the light isn't the greatest in a restaurant, and then you have to decide between 9,000 items listed in minuscule type. You sit there desperately, knowing your turn to order is coming, and in the end, you just have to guess." All the judges said that excess copy on a menu turned them off and thought it would most likely intimidate the typical diner. A short, evocative description following menu items seemed to impress the judges the most.

"Simply phrased statements were the best. Some menus were too clever," said Kasper. "Copy on menus is not intended to show how funny the copywriters are. If being clever helps get the information to the diners, that's fine. But if it gets in the way, then that's a detraction." He said Willie C's Cafe & Bar, in Wichita, Kansas, was judicious when it came to being clever. Their menu won first place in the Average Check Under $8 Per Person category. Willie C's diner-style menu had clever phrases set in triangles at random spots on the menu.

The judges were hard on misspelled words. "I took off points for misspelled words. It is unforgivable when you make that kind of financial commitment not to do a little research and have properly spelled words on your menu," said Allmendinger.

Durability in a menu also earned points with the judges. "You have to ask how well these menus would stand up to the stress and strain of the restaurant atmosphere, with greasy hands and excessive handling. Some of these seemed bullet-proof, and others would have to be replaced almost weekly," said Allmendinger.

For sheer staying power, it would

1991 Great Menu Contest Winners

Grand Prize Winners

☐ *First Place:* China Coast Restaurants, General Mills Restaurants, Inc., Orlando, FL

☐ *Second Place:* Embassy Suites Hotel North (Ellington's Room-Service Menu), Indianapolis, IN

☐ *Third Place:* Boogies Diner, Joppa, MD

Restaurant: Average Check Under $8 Per Person

☐ *First Place:* Willie C's Cafe & Bar, Wichita, KS

☐ *Second Place:* Chancery, DeRosa Corporation, Wauwatosa, WI

☐ *Third Place:* Country Kitchen, International, Minneapolis, MN

Restaurant: Average Check $8–$15 Per Person

☐ *First Place:* China Coast Restaurants, General Mills Restaurants, Inc., Orlando, FL

☐ *Second Place:* El Torito Restaurants, Inc. (Dinner Menu), Irvine, CA

☐ *Third Place:* Leona's Restaurants, Chicago, IL

Restaurant: Average Check Over $15 Per Person

☐ *First Place:* Outlaws Steakhouse & Cantina, Orlando, FL

☐ *Second Place:* Smith Bros. Fish Shanty, DeRosa Corporation, Wauwatosa, WI

☐ *Third Place:* Dakota's Restaurants, Inc., Dallas, TX

Institutional Foodservice

☐ *First Place:* The High Plains Inn, USAF Dining Facility, Malmstrom AFB, Great Falls, MT

☐ *Second Place:* Iowa State University, Dept. of Residence Food Service, Ames, IA

☐ *Third Place:* Mount Carmel East Hospital, Nutritional Services Dept., Columbus, OH

Banquet/Catering

☐ *First Place:* Holiday Inns Worldwide, Memphis, TN

☐ *Second Place:* Hale Koa Hotel, Honolulu, HI

☐ *Third Place:* Hyatt Regency Miami, Miami, FL

Specialty

☐ *First Place:* Embassy Suites Hotel North (Ellington's Room-Service Menu), Indianapolis, IN

☐ *Second Place:* Red Robin (Children's Menu), Seattle, WA

☐ *Third Place:* Lime Rickey's (Beverage Menu), Prime Restaurant Group, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

Greatest Merchandising Power

☐ *First Place:* El Torito Restaurants, Inc. (Summer Menu), Irvine, CA

☐ *Second Place:* Chancery, DeRosa Corporation, Wauwatosa, WI

☐ *Third Place:* Chi-Chi's, Inc., Louisville, KY

Most Imaginative

☐ *First Place:* Aldo Baldo Ristorante, Big 4 Restaurants, Inc., Phoenix, AZ

☐ *Second Place:* B.J.'s A Place for Ribs, Selinsgrove, PA

☐ *Third Place:* Boogies Diner, Joppa, MD

Best Design

☐ *First Place:* Boogies Diner, Joppa, MD

☐ *Second Place:* Chancery, DeRosa Corporation, Wauwatosa, WI

☐ *Third Place:* Fairways Cafe, The Breakers, Palm Beach, FL

seem that the metal-covered menu of Aldo Baldo Ristorante of Phoenix, Arizona, was a shoo-in. A few judges rattled it on the conference table and worried about the ruckus the metal menus might make as dozens of diners perused them at once. In the end, the judges could not ignore the innovative design, the likelihood that the menu cover would not have to be replaced until the next century and the metal binders that would make changing menu pages a snap.

Two menus that drew attention because of their design were entries from Chancery of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, and B.J.'s A Place for Ribs, in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania. Both had a center-spread design and used cartoons and graphics to liven the message. "The center-spread design works well with menus because you open it up, and it's all right in front of you. I don't like leafing through a menu. I don't go to a restaurant to read a book," said Bartlett.

Self-deprecating humor and outrageous cartoons were the order of the day for Chancery's menu. The front cover featured a cartoon character with a head made of cheese playing the piano, while a bikini-clad tomato perched on top of the piano.

Knauer said Chancery's menu showed "a good balance of copy and distraction. The menu items are easy to read and are marked to denote new items, which is good merchandising. I think it is a really fun menu to look at, and it sets the tone for an enjoyable meal."

With the back-to-basics theme still gaining in popularity among the public, the judges agreed that statements on the menu of a commitment to provide customers with first-rate food and service were both prudent and appealing. "The idea of a high level of service and quality should come through on the menu," said Bartlett. "The menu should be more than just menu items. Statements like 'In business for 86 years' or 'Everything comes from our garden out back' make a huge statement about the restaurant to the diner." ❑

Jennifer Batty is a communications specialist at the National Restaurant Association.

FRESH APPROACHES TO FAST FOOD

The newest niche: quickservice menus made from scratch.

by Toni Lydecker

Chefs in white-tablecloth restaurants have always been proud of using only the freshest ingredients and making every menu item from scratch.

Now some owners of quickservice restaurants are starting to take similar pride in freshness.

Meeting high standards for ingredient quality and preparation is no simple matter. It is even more difficult in a setting where customers start drumming their fingers if the wait lasts more than a few minutes and where—no matter how delicious the cheeseburger or miso soup might be—they expect the tab to be modest. Yet a growing number of entrepreneurs are taking on this challenge, convinced that the market is ripe for concepts that tantalize customers' taste buds while saving them time and money.

Menu directions

Hamburgers, barbecue, burritos—sounds like a typical quickservice menu. But there's nothing run-of-the-mill about Goode Company's food. In tribute to the company's fresh-tastes-better philosophy, long lines snake out the doors of its Houston restaurants.

By butchering its own meat, Goode Company maintains control over quality and processing. It can guarantee, for instance, that the beef in a lunchtime burger was ground just that morning. French fries, whole wheat buns and special toppings such as sauteed mushrooms and salsa are all made in house. Like the burgers, barbecue is grilled over mesquite and served with sauce made in 60-gallon batches every couple of days.

Other operators are bypassing standard ethnic favorites such as tacos and pizza in favor of more exotic foreign fare. Focaccia Fiorentina, a small delivery and catering company in Manhattan, has won over jaded corporate customers with an Italian specialty few others were offering: focaccia sandwiches made with unusual fillings (see sidebar).

Athens Marketplace Cafe in Phoenix, Arizona, is a new fast food concept that celebrates the flavors of freshly made Greek food. Two units are operating, and there are plans to franchise more. The mixture of beef and lamb used for gyros contains no fillers and is seasoned with 30 spices for authentic flavor, according to Ron Boat, president of Greek Specialties Corp., the parent company. Rather than relying on a powdered mix, as some Greek restaurants do, the company grinds its own garbanzo beans for falafel and uses fresh spinach in the spanakopita filling.

Other menu items interpret Greek cooking more freely. For example, the lavosh (an Armenian cracker bread sometimes known as Greek pizza) has a topping that includes spicy jalapeno and American cheeses as well as feta. The menu also includes a Mediterranean black-bean soup coupled with a feta muffin.

Scoring nutrition points

As Americans show a growing interest in healthful eating, mega-chains are racing to improve the nutritional profiles of their menus. But they could be outpaced by smaller companies with creative and healthful quickservice menus.

An emphasis on good nutrition ties together the eclectic menu of Bless Your Heart Inc., a company based in Midland, Texas, that now has eight units. Owner Steve Plummer, who opened the first 30-seat store in a location where four restaurants had

failed, knew he was onto a good idea when business soared the first month.

When developing the menu, Plummer brought in dietitians to review the heart-healthy collection of soups, sandwiches and salads. Later on, Plummer bought computer software to analyze the nutritional makeup of menu items.

The results of this research are quesadillas made with whole wheat tortillas, cholesterol-free quiche containing nonfat milk solids, and vegetarian burritos. Bless Your Heart makes its own sour cream and nonfat yogurt for chicken enchiladas and other dishes, and cooks go heavier on spices than on salt. In addition, the restaurants use mozzarella in lieu of higher-fat cheeses such as cheddar.

Joseph Seeman believes his soon-to-open restaurant Out to Lunch Naturally will appeal to mainstream customers and health enthusiasts alike in Albany, New York. "The fruits and vegetables, natural sodas and juices, and whole wheat baked goods will be part of a multiethnic menu, and the decor will give it a popular appeal," he says.

Buying and prepping

These companies have found that reliance on fresh ingredients translates into somewhat lower food costs, but

Meeting high standards for ingredient quality is difficult in a setting where customers start drumming their fingers if the wait lasts more than a few minutes.

can lead to higher labor costs. To control both cost categories and to maintain quality control, most of these quickservice operations centralize at least some of their food production.

For example, the staff assembling orders at Goode Company's taqueria/burger place and two barbecue restaurants work with components prepared in the company's nearby commissary, which also preps food for Goode Company's full-service seafood operation. The commissary is organized into three departments—a bakery, a butchery and a production area. Within each one, staff members are cross-trained so that the work flow can be managed smoothly.

Meat, sauces and falafel served in Greek Specialties Corp.'s restaurants are prepped in the company's processing plant. In addition, one unit has a small commissary where the spinach mix for spanakopita and other vegetables are processed. As a sideline, some product is sold to retail operations.

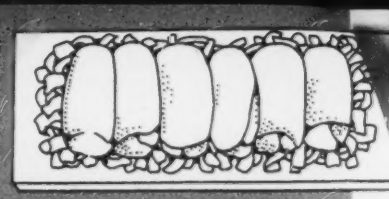
Central processing is more cost efficient and could be a springboard for expansion. "We're trying to modernize the image of Greek fast food," says Boat. "Most restaurants have been run by someone happy with one unit, but we'd like to put together a program that can support in-plant feeding, airports and shopping malls."

Bless Your Heart tests recipes in the kitchen of one store, and muffins and other baked items are tested in another. Soups and hot entrees are developed in a third. Salad dressings, including marinated mushroom, 900 Island and avocado, are available by the pint to customers.

Speedy service

Even when most food is prepped ahead of time, meeting customers' expectations for quick service can be a challenge. A freshly made french fry is "a lot more trouble" to prep and cook than a frozen one, says Pat McCarley, director of operations for Goode Company. "It's harder to make it come out crisp. But when it's done, you taste the potato, not just the oil it was cooked in." The hand-cut fries are blanched in soybean oil, then fried at the last minute.

McCarley is concerned, however, about the difference in service times for burgers and Mexican items in the operation that serves both. Because enchiladas are rolled and fajitas grilled only when an order comes in, the service time can be as long as 12 minutes. Burger and french-fry orders, on the other hand, go out in half the



Relying on fresh ingredients can lead to lower food costs, but higher labor costs.

time. When a party chooses items from each category, the staff is hard put to complete both parts of the order at the same time. Eventually, Goode Company plans to split off the Mexican items, with their longer service times, as the core menu for a fullservice Mexican restaurant.

Birth of a concept

The green minivan, inscribed with the logo Focaccia Fiorentina, inches along in midday Manhattan traffic. Its mission: delivering focaccia sandwiches to a stylish corporate clientele that includes companies such as Calvin Klein, Tiffany & Co., and Morgan Stanley.

Until 18 months ago, neither the company nor the concept existed. Four young men who had become friends in a Swiss boarding school gravitated to New York to start a business together. Because two were from Tuscany and a third was from Milan, something related to Italian food seemed logical—but they were in a city already teeming with Italian restaurants. "Then we noticed there weren't many places to get consistently good focaccia, and usually it was served hot, as part of a bread basket," says partner Leon Bushara.

The partners decided instead to sell focaccia sandwiches filled with meat, cheeses and vegetables, like those they had enjoyed together in Tuscany. Because investment capital totaled less than $10,000, they decided that the operation would be limited to catering and delivery.

A Florentine baker supplied a focaccia recipe and the name of a Manhattan baker to execute it. After numerous tests, the bread passed muster. "Focaccia is just flour, water, olive oil and a little rosemary, but the timing must be just right to get the outside hard and the inside soft," says Tommaso Buti, another partner. Flip-

Other operations come closer to the service times clocked by major quickservice chains. The Athens Marketplace Cafe restaurants complete orders in 1½ to 3 minutes. Although salads and other items are made to order, ingredients are placed in cold pans for fast assembly.

Spreading the freshness gospel

Goode Company trusts word of mouth and customers' taste buds more than formal marketing. "Just make sure you're doing it right consistently and people will know," says McCarley. The menu tells customers that everything is made in-house, but procedures are not described in detail unless a customer asks.

Displays in Athens Marketplace Cafe units intermingle items made in the processing plant with related retail items. Besides generating extra revenue, the bread, phyllo dough, bottles of olives and cans of anchovies remind customers that the concept uses the finest ingredients.

Also on view are five to seven menu items, which add visual interest and show customers what unfamiliar items look like. "It really stimulates sales," says Boat. "We're located in mall food courts, and the displays catch people's eyes as they walk by." The policy of offering a taste of any item often clinches the sale.

Small hearts beside each item on Bless Your Heart's menu tell customers that these low-calorie, low-fat foods are good for them. A full breakdown of calories, fat, cholesterol and sodium is printed for each item. Table tents for items such as frozen desserts explain how Bless Your Heart products differ nutritionally from other brands. Other handouts convey general health information. For example, there is one handout on sugar and another one on recommended exercise programs.

Owner Steve Plummer plans a program that will help customers even more in putting together a healthful meal. A menu board will suggest a menu for each daypart, geared to two levels of consumption: a meal plan for customers maintaining weight and a meal plan for those who are reducing.

Fine-tuning the concept

With a winning concept in place, together with systems for preparing fresh food and serving it fast, the next step for these operations is maintaining profitability.

Some companies move toward a limited menu, weeding out items that are too time-consuming or that fail to produce many orders. Bless Your Heart found that Texas customers familiar with pinto beans did not take to black beans. On the children's menu, Plummer plans to replace the hot dog with a turkey and cheese melt—a smart purchasing move, because there are several other turkey items on the menu.

Souvlaki does not appear on the Athens Marketplace Cafe menu because the meat's cost and the labor required to trim it are prohibitive.

Goode Company buys its ketchup, mustard and mayonnaise from suppliers, says McCarley, because the taste difference between house-made and commercially made is so small. "You can buy a pretty good mayonnaise and add spices to get the flavor you want," says McCarley.

Some of these make-it-fresh companies plan to expand. Greek Specialties Corp. wants to design small Greek kiosks, perhaps in cooperation with a contract management company, for airports, amusement parks and other settings. Management is also looking at mail order of retail products as a possible profit center.

By butchering its own meat, Goode Company can guarantee that the beef in a lunchtime burger was ground just that morning.

Following the wildfire success of the first Bless Your Heart restaurants, Plummer sold five franchises. The three in Texas are still functioning, but stores in Florida and California have closed. He concedes that the company expanded too quickly to maintain strict quality control in far-flung locations. He also discovered that fast-paced expansion might not lead to personal satisfaction: "I've been so busy opening restaurants and putting out fires that there hasn't been much time to do what I like best—developing creative new menu items."

Like the other entrepreneurs profiled here, Plummer will have to gauge carefully how big his company can grow without jeopardizing the focus on fresh fast food. ❑

Toni Lydecker is a writer in Irvington, New York.

ping the bread to make both sides crisp, they found, prevented fillings from turning the sandwiches soggy.

At 6 a.m. on a cold February morning, the partners stood ready with their freshly printed menus at Fifth Avenue and 57th Street. Despite New York's reputation as the city that never sleeps, hardly anyone was around at that hour.

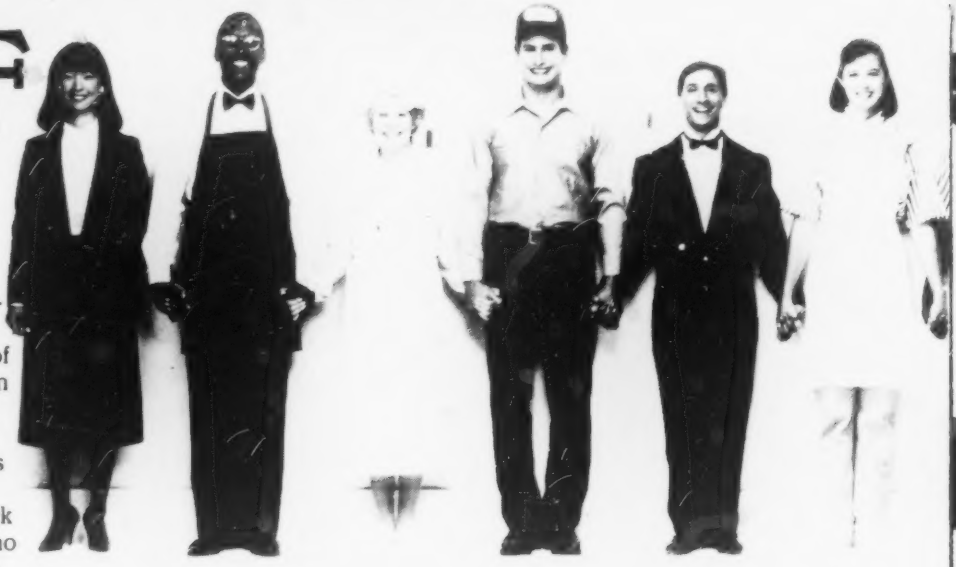
Eventually some passersby took the menus and then, says Bushara, "just to show how little we knew, we came back and waited for the phone to ring. We had bought all the food, but nothing was prepared." They were so elated when the phone rang that one partner cut himself, but panic set in after the third call came while they were still working on the first order.

The next day the partners hired three workers and began the hard work of mastering the restaurant business. A traditional filling of peas and creamy cheese, popular in Italy, left New Yorkers cold. But customers loved the Tirolese, a combination of bresaola (a cured beef), provolone, arugula, lemon and extra-virgin olive oil. Slowly, the mailing list began to read like a Who's Who of fashion houses, banks and publishers, and the operation added a fax machine to send menus and receive orders. Delivery times that were at first unpredictable were pushed down to 25 minutes or less.

Most of all, says Bushara, "We were lucky. Our customers stuck with us while we organized ourselves." What's next for Focaccia Fiorentina? A small cafe and takeout operation.

MANAGING A MULTIETHNIC STAFF

by Gary M. Stern



Walking into the kitchen of the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza in the heart of midtown Manhattan is like entering the United Nations' General Assembly. A variety of languages are heard, and many nations are represented.

The kitchen staff, says chef Patrick Augustyn, consists of employees who are Russian, French, British, Colombian, Korean and Jamaican. But how can Augustyn turn these employees—some of whom speak excellent English and some who speak only broken English—into a team that can turn out quality food promptly? And how can chefs and managers across the United States be sensitive to the ever-increasing number of restaurant employees who hail from ethnic backgrounds?

Managing such a multiethnic staff can be quite a challenge. Working in a kitchen where time is of the essence, the chef, manager, kitchen staff and front of the house all must work together as a team. To the manager or chef who says that he doesn't have time to understand cultural differences, consultant Osceola Edmondson says, "You can't afford not to consider cultural differences. The results pay off in added productivity." Edmondson teaches a class called "Managing Diversity" and heads the Common Sense Consulting Company in Columbia, Maryland.

Most restaurant managers, notes Edmondson, will say that they treat all their staff the same. That's the problem, he suggests. "Managing diversity is treating everyone differently," says Edmondson.

Cultural differences exhibit themselves in behavior in the workplace. For example, says Edmondson, when a chef tells a Korean prep person who recently joined the staff to cut lettuce for the salad, and the Korean nods, the chef will presume that the employee knows exactly what he is doing. But nodding in the Korean culture, says Edmondson, means "I hear what you say." It does not necessarily mean, "I understand how to do what you ask."

Edmondson also points out that when an Iranian kitchen staff member communicates within two inches of a chef's or manager's nose, he is not in any way trying to show disrespect. That's the physical space that the Iranian culture prefers when communicating.

Chef Patrick Augustyn of the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza says that making an effort to know each employee individually is a sure way to cut through problems of diversity. "Whose wife is sick? Who celebrates Christmas when? If you know that certain reports in the news affect their nationality, then talk to them about it," says Augustyn. Your staff is going to make or break you, so understanding each member of the staff is time productively spent.

Facing the language problem

One major issue in managing a multiethnic crew is a staff's difficulties with the English language, says Stephan Pyles, co-owner of the Routh Street Cafe in Dallas. When the staff doesn't speak a common language, the kitchen's speed may be diminished, he says. Breakdowns can occur, and the kitchen's ability to get dishes out on time can falter. He has learned what restaurateurs call "kitchen Spanish" to help improve the flow in the back of the house.

Communication is "one of the first barriers that an organization has to overcome if they select people who don't know the language," says hospitality industry consultant Toni Chance of Chance Bateman Inc. in Hampton, New Hampshire. One way to prevent immigrant employees from feeling

isolated is for the restaurant to provide in-house or contracted English lessons, says Chance.

Although language differences can cause problems in a restaurant, most of the time conflicts arise from "culture barriers," says restaurant consultant Walter Staib of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Having worked in a restaurant with several Jamaicans, Staib came to learn that culturally they were very proud and hard-working people. But if a manager reprimanded a Jamaican in front of his peers, the employee felt a greater level of humiliation than is ordinarily the case. Staib learned quickly that if he had any constructive criticism to offer one of his Jamaican staff members, he spoke to the person in private.

A healthy work ethic and restaurant environment can promote acceptance of different cultures in an operation, says Routh Street Cafe's Stephan Pyles. Pyles explains that the overriding mission of the restaurant transcends cultural differences. "If you work at Routh Street, you learn that we are striving to present the highest-quality food. That goes for everyone, including prep cooks who don't speak English. Everything that they're chopping has to be the same size. We don't allow any bad leaves on salad greens. These things are instilled from day one, and they have nothing to do with color or culture."

Consultant Toni Chance adds that a restaurant's work environment can determine whether ethnic and cultural differences are accepted or whether they lead to conflict. Having an environment in which differences can be discussed rather than suppressed leads to a positive atmosphere.

Restaurants that have problems with cultural differences, Chance suggests, "usually have other issues involved which may or may not be obvious." Often the issue may be recognition. Each person's role in the restaurant—washing dishes, prepping food, serving food, cleaning off tables—serves as a vital component of the whole, and each worker deserves individual recognition.

Racism and discrimination can be problems in any work situation in any country, and these problems can filter into the restaurant. Pyles acknowledges that the owner can set the tone for creating an environment where racism and bias will not be tolerated anywhere in the restaurant. Pyles says that when intolerance has been exhibited, he "lets the person know in no uncertain terms that it won't be permitted from anyone." Waiters are discouraged from showing insensitivity to staff members in the back of the house and vice versa.

The chef's role

The chef, too, can play a major role in determining whether cultural differences are accepted or scorned. "Just the way he relays information to his staff plays a major role," says Staib. Avoiding preferential treatment on assigning shifts and avoiding different rules for members of different nationalities can lead to an equitable restaurant environment.

Chefs who have succeeded in molding a team out of staff members from many nationalities usually operate like a "coach rather than an executive dictator," says consultant Toni Chance. Coaches can be tough and demanding, and they expect results, but they recognize that only when the

team plays together will the kitchen succeed.

One way to achieve teamwork, she says, is for the chef to explain to each person what his or her tasks, objectives and goals are, both individually and collectively. Instead of screaming at an individual for breaking a glass, Chance suggests that at a meeting the chef can explain how much money was lost last month because of glass breakage. Eliciting ideas from the

Tips on handling a multiethnic staff

- ☐ If you have employees who don't speak English, place a sign above the dishwasher with 20 or 30 useful English words.
- ☐ Around holiday time, expect that many immigrants may react to being separated from their families.
- ☐ Discover what makes each worker tick, what motivates each employee, what makes each one distinctive.
- ☐ Put yourself in the shoes of any employee with whom you are dealing. How would you feel if you were being reprimanded in front of your peers by the boss?
- ☐ One surefire incentive for many immigrants remains economics. Bonuses, increased sales and gratuity sharing make a strong impact on all people, including people of foreign heritage.
- ☐ Offer information to immigrants pertinent to their lives outside of the workplace—daycare help, counseling, medical care.
- ☐ Seize every opportunity to raise an employee's self-esteem and grant recognition for a job well-done.
- ☐ Be honest with employees. If a busboy who does not speak English well wants to become a waiter, let him know that he must first improve his English skills.
- ☐ Try a "culture day" once a month, where employees bring in dishes from their native culture and describe their culture.
- ☐ View diversity as a strength, not a drawback.
- ☐ Borrow an idea from corporations called "mentoring," which matches an experienced employee of one ethnic group with a novice from the same ethnic group.

staff, too, can create more involvement and participation from all members. Once people begin to see that they can communicate, teamwork is easier to achieve.

To reach a multiethnic staff, it helps to see things from the employee's viewpoint. Loret Carbone, vice president of human resources at the Chicago-based Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises restaurants, says that many of the Hispanic staff members who work in the company's restaurants have been doctors, businesspeople or teachers in their native country.

To sensitize managers to the life of immigrants, part of a manager's training at Lettuce Entertain You includes a showing of the film "El Norte," which concerns a Hispanic immigrant adjusting to life in the United States. Managers are told that many immigrants send a portion of their checks back home to care for their families.

Understand the employee's culture

When Carbone was first named manager of a restaurant, she too faced the impact of cultural differences. Carbone says that foreign-born staff members were sometimes reluctant to carry out her orders because in their country women had rarely assumed leadership positions. Carbone had to discuss with the employees individually the fact that she was the boss and that if they didn't follow her instructions, there would be consequences.

When conflicts arise, they must be settled equitably. One consultant remembers seeing a flare-up between a line cook and a foreign prep person. When the manager entered the kitchen and saw the altercation, he immediately accused the prep person of instigating it. It turned out that the line cook had initiated the conflict. A manager must objectively investigate the facts and make sure that all parties share responsibility.

Why are some people resistant to multiethnic staffs? Lee Gardenswartz, a Southern California management consultant whose company focuses on cultural diversity, says "human beings are resistant to change, are afraid of it, and prefer the status quo. Cultural diversity shakes up the status quo and is threatening." Her program encourages people to understand cultural differences in people.

Supporting one's staff is another way to ensure respect. Loret Carbone says that at times patrons have insulted Hispanic employees. "If they [the patrons who made the remarks] don't back down, they're asked to leave. We're 100 percent behind our employees," she says.

How management treats its employees, suggests Salvador Rivera, president of the Los Angeles-based Jobs for Progress, a manpower training program, will determine the loyalty of its employees. "Seek their advice as to how you can deal with them. They know where they are hurting and what the cultural differences are. We encourage people to talk to the individuals to try to get them to tell you how they would do the work," he says. While restaurants are usually focused on the customer, management must always be aware of the needs of the employees, as well. Most restaurant employees from foreign countries want to "fit in, build loyalty, be accepted, be good workers and do what managers want them to do," Rivera says.

Most restaurants have similar goals: to have a restaurant and kitchen with minimal conflicts based on ethnic differences. Back at New York's Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, chef Augustyn is conferring with a Colombian employee, asking about his wife's health, making sure a Jamaican employee receives his performance appraisal and considering a Korean employee for a promotion. He spends considerable time in the kitchen, knowing that an attentive chef can ensure that all staff is treated fairly. And he never loses sight of his goal: to turn his multiethnic kitchen staff into a team. ❑

Gary Stern is a writer in New York City.

Managing Hispanic employees

What special techniques can owners and managers employ to heighten their effectiveness with Hispanic employees?

Salvador Rivera, president of Jobs for Progress, a Los Angeles-based, nonprofit organization that specializes in employment and training programs, says that the most critical element in working with Hispanics is showing them "courtesy and respect." Most Hispanic traditions stress these characteristics. If the manager treats Hispanic employees with courtesy and respect, the odds are much stronger that he or she can reach them and gain their respect.

Pride also plays a major role in the psychology of Hispanics (as it does for almost everyone). To maintain employee pride, Rivera suggests that when a restaurant manager gives directions to a Hispanic employee, the manager should be especially careful not to demean, degrade or humiliate him and thereby injure his pride. He encourages managers to explain to Hispanic employees how their roles fit into the restaurant's success.

If the manager sees that the Hispanic employee has some language difficulties, the manager should take extra time to ensure that instructions are understood and adhered to. But Rivera stresses that "because this person doesn't command the language doesn't mean they can't command the job."

One of the worst mistakes a manager can make, suggests consultant Osceola Edmondson, is mocking a Hispanic person's accent or ridiculing someone who makes a language miscue.

Learn as much as you can about each specific Hispanic nationality. Don't expect that all Salvadorans, Argentinians and Mexicans will display the same characteristics.

#117

The credo of the good employee

The first job I ever had was washing dishes in a cafeteria when I was 14 years old. I had a rough, tough and gruff supervisor who had a heart of gold and who told me on the first day that if I ever wanted to be a good employer, the first step was to be a darn good employee. I have always felt that this was good advice (in the same vein as "if you want to be a good leader, you start by being a good follower"), and I've never forgotten it.

Moreover, I've given considerable thought to the qualities, values, personal standards and characteristics of people I have encountered over the years whom I consider to be "darn good employees." I have also developed a creed, so to speak, that addresses this topic, and for what it's worth, I'll share it with you.

The credo of the good employee

1. As I have accepted this position, I will become the very best employee my employer has ever hired for this position.

2. I will exhibit a cheerful "can do" attitude at all times, as evidenced by a genuine smile when interacting with others.

3. I will be at my appointed place at the appointed time, dressed and groomed appropriately, ready to work.

4. I will read carefully the information given to me relating to my position and to the organization.

5. I will ask questions about matters of which I am not sure, speaking clearly and listening intently.

6. I understand that the better I perform my assignment, the easier it will be for me and my coworkers and the more successful the organization will become, which in turn is beneficial to me.

7. I will demonstrate an improvement attitude, seeking, in consultation with my supervisor(s), to make things with which I am concerned operate more efficiently and effectively.

8. I will never raise my voice in anger, nor will I ever become physically or mentally abusive to people or property.

9. I realize that the better I perform in my position, the greater the service I can provide to others—which underscores my belief in a strong work ethic and a strong service ethic.

10. I will volunteer for new or additional work assignments to give evidence of my desire to learn and to accept greater responsibility.

11. I will be loyal to my employer in words and deeds, with everyone with whom I come in contact.

12. I understand that in the long run it is the customers we satisfy who pay my wages.

13. I will be knowledgeable about the standards set forth by my employer with respect to my position, and I will meet or exceed them at all times.

14. I will be honest and forthright in my relationships with all with whom I come into contact.

15. When new employees are assigned to me for training, I will teach them the attitude, knowledge and skills at the highest level at which I am capable, to ensure their success in their assignment(s).

Fisher's Law #117 (attributed to and in memory of Al): If you aspire to be a good employer, you need first to be a good employee.

You can't catch AIDS from food or social contact. According to the experts at the Centers for Disease Control, that is a fact your employees ought to know.

Have you prepared your staff for the illness of a fellow worker?

To help ward off panic and the rumors it may breed, the National Restaurant Association has produced a pair of videotapes entitled ***The AIDS Issue***.

The first tape prepares management for the problems arising when an employee contracts AIDS. The second tape tells employees how AIDS is contracted. It makes it clear that the foodservice workplace is safe in this regard, but warns them how to protect their health during non-working hours.

Also available is ***Basic Facts about AIDS for Foodservice Employees***, an 8-page pamphlet designed to calm unnecessary fear.

To order, call the Publications department at the National Restaurant Association (800) 424-5156

The AIDS Issue: MG900
$32.95 for members
$36.25 for nonmembers

Basic Facts about AIDS: PB010
$1.25 for members
$1.65 for nonmembers

Children strongly influence dining-out decisions

A new National Restaurant Association publication, The Market for Children and Family Dining, *reveals that half of parents rate their preteen children as influential in the decision to dine at a tableservice restaurant.*

More mothers are going out to eat with their children now than were 14 years ago, according to a *Good Housekeeping*/Roper survey. In 1990, nearly three-fourths (72 percent) of mothers surveyed said they often go out to eat with their children. This compares to a much lower 54 percent in 1976.

Foodservice establishments have become a lifestyle necessity for today's busy families. The presence of children in a household modifies a consumer's dining-out behavior, but how does this affect restaurant spending?

A new association publication, *The Market for Children and Family Dining,* contains practical information on families and children, ranging from population projections and household-composition data to studies conducted specifically for the National Restaurant Association.

Highlights of the report

□ *Children are influential in decision to eat out.* An association Gallup study reveals that half of parents surveyed in 1990 reported their children under 13 as being "very influential" or "somewhat influential" in the decision to eat out at a tableservice restaurant. Moreover, children were likely to influence the selection of a specific tableservice restaurant.

□ *Children and families capture large portion of total spending on food away from home.* In 1989, households with children represented 43 percent of all spending on food away from home, although they composed a lower 35 percent of all households, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Consumer Expenditure Survey.*

□ *Number of births reached record high.* In 1989 the number of births exceeded 4 million for the first time since 1964, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Moreover, this pace was maintained through 1990. Restaurateurs may be seeing more young customers in the next few years.

□ *More emphasis on quickservice and off-premises eating.* According to a special association CREST* study, there was a greater emphasis on eating at quickservice restaurants in households with children under 13—especially at pizza, hamburger, Mexican, and ice cream restaurants—than in households with no preteen children. Also, more than half (54 percent) of all restaurant orders were for off-premises eating in households with preteen children, compared with 40 percent in households without preteen children.

□ *Favorite menu items.* The association Gallup study showed that adults named hamburgers as their child's favorite menu item. About 42 percent of adults with children less than six years of age, and 45 percent of adults with children six to 12 years old did so. French fries, chicken and pizza also ranked high.

□ *Favorite restaurant services for children.* According to the association Gallup study, parents cited providing children's favorite food items, providing quick service and offering child-size portions as the most important services that tableservice restaurants can offer for children less than 13 years old.

—Elizabeth Gordon

**CREST stands for* Consumer Reports on Eating Share Trends, *a diary survey of one of the NPD marketing and research companies.*

How adults rate children's influence in the decision to dine at a tableservice restaurant

At least half of parents rated their preteen children as influential in the decision to dine out at a tableservice restaurant

"How influential is/are your child/children in the decision to eat out?"

Influence according to adults	Influence of children less than 6 years of age	Influence of children 6 to 12 years of age
5—very influential	35%	32%
4	13	23
3	21	27
2	8	8
1—not at all influential	23	10
Total	100%	100%

Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup survey, 1990

How to order the report

Copies of *The Market for Children and Family Dining* (CS680) are available to association members for $25 and to nonmembers for $50. This includes shipping and handling charges. (Overseas orders require a 20 percent surcharge.) All orders must be prepaid

You may order by sending a check or money order to the National Restaurant Association Publications Department, 1200 Seventeenth Street, NW, Washington DC 20036-3097. For credit-card orders, call the association's information service and library between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Eastern Time) at (800) 424-5156 or (202) 331-5960.

New compensation study for salaried personnel in foodservice

A new National Restaurant Association study, Compensation for Salaried Personnel in Foodservice, *offers insight into the compensation practices and policies of foodservice organizations.*

A wealth of compensation information for more than 30 executive and salaried positions in foodservice is now available, based on a member survey conducted by the association in late 1990. Data was compiled in cooperation with the Hay Group, a compensation consulting firm.

Company-furnished meals were the perk most frequently offered to salaried employees.

Median base salary and median bonus data are presented for each position, together with upper and lower quartile figures. Compensation and bonus information for every position is available. This information is broken down by a variety of parameters, such as type of restaurant, scope of operation and sales volume. In addition, information on industry perquisites, leave policies and benefits programs changes are also presented in the report.

A total of 1,305 surveys were used to produce the report. These respondents represented 12,708 units and employed more than 37,000 salaried workers.

The typical survey participant:

- was a privately owned corporation
- operated locally
- reported annual sales of $900,000
- employed fewer than five salaried workers
- and was a full-menu tableservice operation.

Study highlights

Median annual base salaries ranged from $95,000 for the position of chairman of the board to $18,200 for night manager. Median annual bonuses ranged from $27,500 for chairman of the board to $1,041 for assistant unit manager.

An organization's scope of operation and sales volume were important factors in determining compensation levels. For example, the median annual base salary for the position of vice president of operations was $40,000 for organizations operating on a local basis,

Compensation for salaried personnel

Position	Total number of positions reporting	Median annual base salary	Total number of positions reporting	Median annual bonus*
Owner	757	$38,000	335	$15,000
Chairman of the board	36	95,000	18	27,500
President	304	47,500	122	15,750
Chief executive officer	105	46,000	54	10,000
Chief financial officer	78	48,000	36	10,000
Chief operating officer	95	50,000	52	6,000
Treasurer	109	28,000	40	6,000
Vice president				
General	30	40,000	15	8,875
Development/Real estate	26	67,182	15	15,500
Distribution/Purchasing	33	46,000	15	7,200
Finance	31	60,000	15	19,000
Franchising	14	76,875	8	10,746
Management information systems	21	56,500	10	8,783
Marketing	58	44,200	29	6,500
Operations	162	50,000	77	10,000
Personnel/Human resources	54	42,000	22	6,000
Other function	43	46,680	25	10,000
Controller	228	30,000	100	3,000
Training director	57	30,500	30	3,000
Food and beverage director	305	32,736	111	2,500
Executive chef	483	31,000	216	2,050
Banquet manager	180	23,250	54	2,000
Catering manager	157	24,000	69	3,000
Unit manager	8,764	25,740	6,852	2,500
Assistant unit manager	11,873	21,600	9,378	1,041
Night manager	317	18,200	155	1,121
Manager trainee	2,017	18,600	69	2,000
Dining room manager	895	20,425	565	1,305
Kitchen manager	970	22,000	390	1,700
Regional manager	508	50,200	466	6,800
District manager	887	42,000	840	4,817

**For positions reporting annual bonus*

Source: National Restaurant Association, *Compensation for Salaried Personnel in Foodservice*, 1991

compared with $89,632 for organizations operating on a national basis. For foodservice operations with an annual sales volume of less than $1 million, the median base salary was $21,000 for a vice president of operations. That median salary compared with $72,500 for organizations with an annual sales volume of $10 million or more.

Company-furnished meals were the perquisite most frequently offered to salaried employees. More than half of survey respondents indicated that their company provided meals free of charge, and an additional 12 percent of survey participants noted that their company paid partially for meals. Other popular perquisites included health and accident insurance, major medical insurance and professional seminars.

Participants in the survey were asked to indicate any significant changes to their benefits programs in the past year and any changes anticipated within the next two years. Among those respondents reporting changes in the last year, improved medical coverage was the most frequently cited. Establishing a 401(k) plan was the most frequently mentioned change in benefits programs expected within the next two years.

—Hudson Riehle

The top five changes in benefits programs

Changes made in 1990:

- ☐ Improved medical coverage
- ☐ Increased employee share of benefits costs
- ☐ Instituted profit-sharing
- ☐ Improved group life/health insurance
- ☐ Offered longer vacations

Changes planned for the next two years:

- ☐ Establish a 401(k) plan
- ☐ Improve health insurance
- ☐ Provide profit-sharing
- ☐ Increase employees' share of benefits costs
- ☐ Institute a pension plan

Source: National Restaurant Association, *Compensation for Salaried Personnel in Foodservice*, 1991.

How to order the complete report

The association's *Compensation for Salaried Personnel in Foodservice* (publication CS160) will be available this month to association members for $30 and to nonmembers for $60. This includes shipping and handling charges. (Overseas orders require a 20 percent surcharge.) All orders must be prepaid.

You may order by sending a check or money order to the National Restaurant Association Publications Department, 1200 Seventeenth Street, NW, Washington DC 20036-3097. For credit-card orders, call the association's information service and library between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Eastern Time) at (800) 424-5156 or (202) 331-5960.

Patrons dine differently while on vacation

With the peak vacation travel season rapidly approaching, restaurants that benefit from tourists or travelers should be aware that people dine differently while on vacation. A new National Restaurant Association CREST special study of vacation dining in 1990 reveals the differences.

Tourists can be a restaurateur's dream: a set of customers with money budgeted for dining out and no option of cooking at home. But restaurateurs should note that eating-out patterns for people on vacation are sometimes radically different from when they are not on vacation. A National Restaurant Association CREST special study reveals that customers tend to visit different types of restaurants while on vacation. These visits vary not only among age groups but also by the season during which the vacation was taken.

Why should restaurateurs try to gain an edge by attracting travelers? First, according to a 1989 study by Louis Harris and Associates for *Travel & Leisure* magazine, approximately 41.3 million households took a trip for vacation or mainly personal reasons in 1988. In addition, the survey found that about seven out of 10 traveling Americans took more than one trip in 1988 for personal pleasure.

Where do people eat on vacation?

Vacation travel brings about changes in the distribution of restaurant traffic among segments. Customers on vacation are more likely than usual to patronize midscale and upscale establishments, and they are less likely to patronize quickservice restaurants.

According to the association's CREST special study, 53 percent of all 1990 vacation restaurant traffic was at quickservice restaurants, with an additional 32 percent of traffic going to midscale, and the remaining 14 percent going to upscale. Within the upscale segment, moderate-check establishments captured 59 percent and higher-check eateries logged 41 percent of traffic.

This is substantially different from the distribution of non-vacation restaurant traffic. Quickservice establishments captured a larger 69 percent of non-vacation traffic, while midscale restaurants garnered a lower 23 percent, and upscale restaurants tallied 8 percent of traffic. Of all upscale restaurant traffic, moderate check restaurants accounted for 80 percent of traffic and higher-check restaurants accounted for 20 percent.

However, these proportions vary greatly by season. In the summer of 1990, quickservice restaurants accounted for 58.8 percent of vacation restaurant traffic. That share declined to 46.5 percent in the fall. Conversely, midscale restaurants accounted for 36.3 percent of vacation restaurant traffic in the fall but

Breakdown of restaurant traffic by segment among patrons on vacation versus patrons not on vacation, 1990

Diners of all ages had a higher proportion of visits to midscale and upscale restaurants while on vacation

Age	Percent of total traffic: On vacation	Percent of total traffic: Not on vacation	Percentage point difference
Less than 18 years old			
Quickservice	68.3%	83.7%	−15.4
Midscale	22.8	12.7	+10.1
Upscale	8.8	3.6	+ 5.2
18 to 34 years old			
Quickservice	61.6%	76.3%	−14.7
Midscale	25.3	16.3	+ 9.0
Upscale	13.1	7.3	+ 5.8
35 to 49 years old			
Quickservice	55.8%	70.5%	−14.7
Midscale	28.8	21.0	+ 7.8
Upscale	15.4	8.5	+ 6.9
50 to 64 years old			
Quickservice	41.4%	56.2%	−14.8
Midscale	41.5	33.3	+ 8.2
Upscale	17.1	10.5	+ 6.6
65 years old and older			
Quickservice	39.3%	48.5%	− 9.2
Midscale	46.6	41.7	+ 4.9
Upscale	14.1	9.8	+ 4.3

Note: *Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.*
Source: National Restaurant Association CREST special study, 1991; NPD/CREST Annual Household Report, 1990; National Restaurant Association

Will recession affect travel?

A recent survey of 200 households indicates that the recession may have an impact on the demand for travel. The survey, conducted by D.K. Shifflet and Associates (DKS&A) between March 9 and March 19, 1991, found that 76 percent of households surveyed had a member who was planning to travel within the next six months (that is, by September). Just a month earlier, only 51 percent of households surveyed responded in a similar fashion.

Despite the increase in travel plans, travelers are likely to be more price conscious in the coming months. About 40 percent of households surveyed responded that the cost of travel most affects their travel plans. An additional 26 percent stated that their travel plans were most affected by the current economy.

Although cost will be an issue for many travelers, this does not mean that all business sectors that benefit from travel will be equally affected. DKS&A's January survey indicated that travelers were expecting to cut back on certain expenditures in the first half of 1991. Compared with the first half of 1990, 19 percent more households surveyed expected to take more short leisure trips in place of long ones in the first half of 1991. Similarly, 19 percent more households expected to trade down from airline to automobile travel. About 18 percent more planned to look for special lodging offers, and 16 percent more were planning to stay with friends or relatives rather than hotels while vacationing.

There was no increase in the proportion of households that expected to spend less on food while away from home. This is good news for restaurateurs who benefit from travelers. A good restaurant meal may still be considered an "essential" during travel, rather than a discretionary luxury.

Source: D.K. Shifflet & Associates, Ltd., National Restaurant Association

only 29.4 percent of traffic in the summer. Upscale restaurants experienced similar seasonal shifts (see chart).

Part of this change in distribution in eater occasions by season may be accounted for by shifts in the age of eaters. In the summer quarter of 1990, diners less than 18 years old (with whom quickservice restaurants tend to be popular), accounted for 26.3 percent of vacation restaurant traffic. Yet in the fall, this group of young people accounted for only 12.3 percent of vacation restaurant traffic. Conversely, adults between 50 and 64 years of age (who tend to patronize midscale and upscale establishments) accounted for 28.1 percent of vacation restaurant traffic in the fall and only 18.6 percent of restaurant traffic in the summer (see chart).

Breakfast is bigger on vacation

Among the three major meal periods, breakfast/morning snacks captured 19.8 percent of vacation restaurant traffic—a substantially higher proportion than the 11.1 percent for non-vacation traffic. Lunch and supper traffic accounted for a smaller proportion of on-vacation traffic than non-vacation traffic (see chart next page).

Analysis of meal-period vacation traffic by segment also reveals profound differences. For example, at quickservice restaurants both breakfast and lunch captured a greater share of traffic among those on vacation. Supper, which accounted for 40.4 percent of non-vacation traffic at quickservice restaurants in 1990, accounted for only 28.5 percent of vacation traffic. Lunch captured the

largest share of vacation traffic at quickservice restaurants.

Midscale restaurants showed a similar distribution of traffic among meal periods. In this segment, breakfast traffic accounted for 31.7 percent of total traffic among those on vacation, but only 16.6 percent of non-vacation traffic. Both lunch and supper accounted for smaller proportions of restaurant traffic at midscale restaurants among people on vacation.

Among moderate-check upscale restaurants, there was little shifting in meal-period traffic distribution when comparing vacation traffic to non-vacation traffic. The only meal period to see a decline in vacation share of traffic was lunch.

Fewer deals are used by patrons on vacation.

Perhaps the most dramatic change in meal-period traffic distribution occurred at higher-check upscale establishments. In this segment, breakfast/morning snacks accounted for 23.8 percent of vacation traffic, compared with only 11.2 percent of non-vacation traffic. Conversely, lunch accounted for a much smaller share of total vacation traffic at higher-check upscale establishments—14.9 percent compared with 27.3 percent of non-vacation traffic. Supper accounted for a slightly smaller portion of on-vacation than non-vacation traffic.

Breakdown of restaurant traffic by meal period among patrons on vacation versus patrons not on vacation, 1990

Within all segments, breakfast traffic is higher among patrons on vacation

Segment	Percent of total traffic		Percentage point difference
	On vacation	Not on vacation	
Total industry			
Breakfast/AM snack	19.8%	11.1%	+ 8.7
Lunch	34.1	36.4	− 2.3
Supper	35.4	41.7	− 6.3
Quickservice			
Breakfast/AM snack	14.6%	10.0%	+ 4.6
Lunch	40.4	36.4	+ 4.0
Supper	28.5	40.4	−11.9
Midscale			
Breakfast/AM snack	31.7%	16.6%	+15.1
Lunch	29.5	38.1	− 8.6
Supper	34.4	38.6	− 4.2
Moderate check upscale			
Breakfast/AM snack	5.5%	3.7%	+ 1.8
Lunch	25.0	32.2	− 7.2
Supper	67.4	61.4	+ 6.0
Higher-check upscale			
Breakfast/AM snack	23.8%	11.2%	+12.6
Lunch	14.9	27.3	−12.4
Supper	56.2	56.9	− 0.7

Note: *Percentages may not add to 100 due to exclusion of afternoon and evening snack traffic.*
Source: National Restaurant Association CREST special study, 1991; NPD/CREST Annual Household Report, 1990; National Restaurant Association

The reasons for these shifts may be due to activities undertaken by travelers, as well as the fact that they usually do not have the option to eat at home. For example, one reason breakfast may be more important to patrons on vacation (in all segments) may be due to the fact that travelers may want a hearty breakfast before leaving for a full day of sightseeing. Lunch for travelers may be a "quick bite" on the way to another destination. Consequently, quickservice establishments may provide the sought-after convenience. For the evening meal, it is possible that vacationers want to sit down and relax following their full day. Thus, they opt for midscale or upscale establishments, rather than quickservice.

People on vacation spend more, use fewer deals

What should restaurateurs expect from diners on vacation? The average vacationer spends more for a meal. According to the association's CREST special study, the average eater check per person while on vacation in 1990 was $4.81. By comparison, the average check per eater for all restaurant visits in 1990 was a lower $3.88.

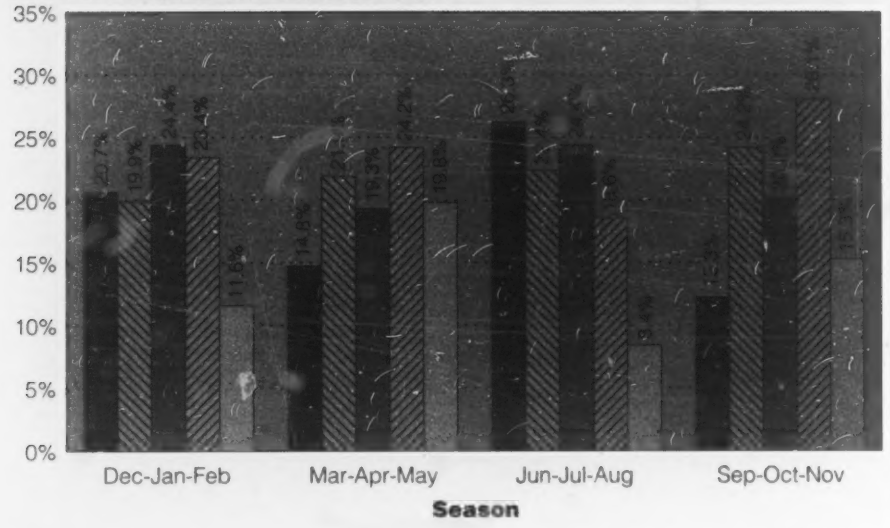
Average eater checks for quickservice, midscale and moderate-check upscale were all higher for people on vacation. At quickservice restaurants, the average 1990 eater check was $2.88, and the average eater check on vacation was $2.97. For midscale restaurants, checks averaged $4.73 per person for all visits, while the average check on vacation was a higher $5.22. Similarly, average checks at moderate-check upscale restaurants were higher while on vacation, compared with checks for all visits: $8.64 compared with $7.87.

On the other hand, aver-

Seasonal vacation restaurant traffic

The age of vacation diners varies greatly by time of year

Percent of vacation eater occasions

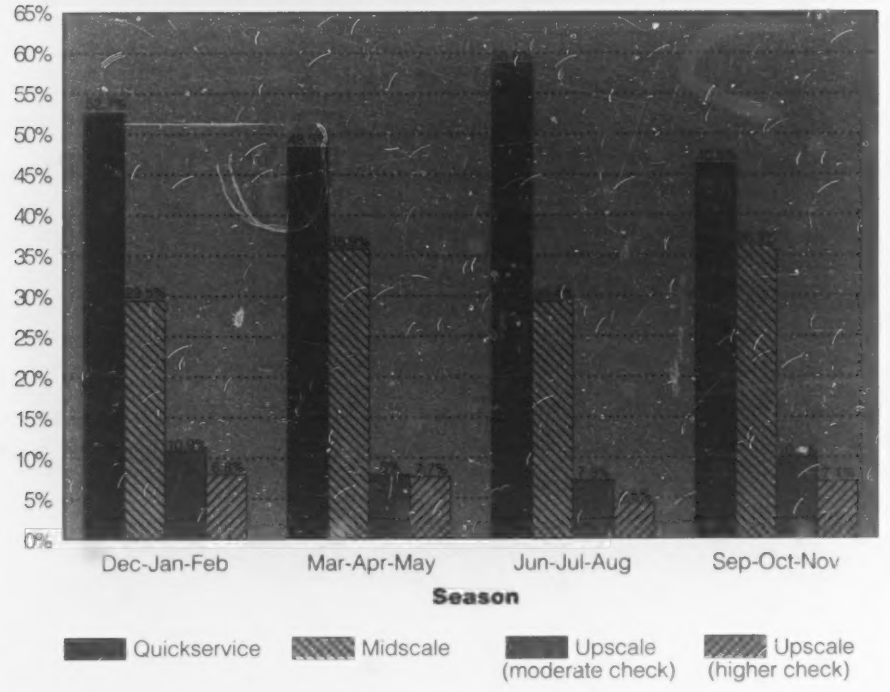


Source: National Restaurant Association CREST special study, 1991

Breakdown of vacation restaurant traffic by segment [illegible] 1990

Vacationers patronize quickservice at the highest rate during summer

Percent of vacation eater occasions



Source: National Restaurant Association CREST special study, 1991

age eater checks at higher-check upscale restaurants were much lower when the diners were on vacation ($13.61 compared with $15.62). Part of this difference in eater checks may have to do with the fact that a substantially greater proportion of vacation visits to higher-check upscale restaurants are for breakfast, which tends to be a less expensive meal.

The difference in check size may be partially due to the fact that fewer deals are used on vacation. In 1990, the rate of deal use while on vacation was just over half of what it was for all

The average vacationer spends more for a meal.

restaurant visits. Deals were used on 10.9 percent of restaurant visits while on vacation but on a much higher 20.8 percent of all visits in 1990. Most notably, deals were used on only 11.4 percent of quickservice visits while on vacation, compared with 23.3 percent of all quickservice visits. Vacation deal use was also markedly lower for midscale (10.4 percent versus 16.2 percent) and moderate-check upscale (8.2 percent versus 15.3 percent) restaurants, when compared with use for all visits in 1990. In fact, the only industry segment for which vacation deal use was at normal use levels was at higher-check upscale restaurants—13.3 percent versus 13.4 percent.

—Nancy Michalski

Spotlight on club restaurants

Food and beverage sales at clubs are projected to reach $2.3 billion in 1991, up 5.4 percent over last year (a 0.8 percent advance in real terms). Restaurant revenue growth at clubs, however, remained sluggish compared with other sources of club income, such as sporting activities and room rentals.*

Clubs, sporting camps and recreational camps are expected to post food and beverage sales of $2.3 billion in 1991, up 5.4 percent from $2.2 billion in 1990, according to the National Restaurant Association's *Foodservice Industry Forecast*. After adjusting for inflation, the gain is expected to be 0.8 percent in 1991, double the projected real gain for total eating and drinking places. According to association data, there were an estimated 10,310 clubs with foodservice in the United States in 1988.

Membership up

Pannell Kerr Forster's *Clubs in Town and Country 1990* reveals that membership at private clubs in the United States showed positive growth in 1990. Country clubs and city clubs each posted a 1 percent gain in the number of members. Country-club membership grew about 1 percent in the South and Far West, and growth was virtually flat in the East and Midwest. City-club membership, on the other hand, varied substantially by region. Club membership declined 1 percent in the Far West, increased a full 3 percent in the South and increased 1 percent in the Midwest and East.

Higher average check

As would be expected, full-menu tableservice restaurants in clubs exhibit some unique operating characteristics, according to the National Restaurant Association's *Restaurant Industry Operations Report '90*. In 1989, the median average check size in club restaurants was $13.08, which was higher than the $10.04 for all full-menu tableservice restaurants. Conversely, the median daily seat turnover was 0.5 in club restaurants, which was substantially lower than the turnover rate of 1.3 for all full-menu tableservice restaurants.

Club restaurants reported higher staffing levels than other types of full-menu tableservice restaurants. In 1989, a median of 42 employees worked at club restaurants, compared with a median 34 employees in full-menu tableservice restaurants. In club restaurants, 18 employees worked full-time, as did 16 part-time employees (20 to 35 hours per week) and 8 part-part-time employees (less than 20 hours per week). This compares to a lower 14 full-time workers, 12 part-time workers, and 8 part-part-time workers at all full-menu tableservice restaurants.

Higher compensation for employees

Not only did club restaurants have a larger number of employees, but the median pay for salaried employees was often higher than in other tableservice restaurants. For the first time, the National Restaurant Association's *Compensation for Salaried Personnel in Foodservice* provides data on wages and benefits for salaried employees and executives in club restaurants. According to survey results, executive chefs at club restaurants received a median base salary of $34,894 and a median bonus of $1,350 in 1990, compared with a median $31,000 salary and a median $2,050 bonus for respondents from all types of restaurants. The median base salary for club food and beverage directors was $31,000, along with $2,000 as a median bonus. These amounts are slightly lower than those reported for food and beverage directors in all restaurants ($32,736 and $2,500).

Club-restaurant unit managers received a median base salary of $28,000 and a median bonus of $3,000, compared with $25,740 and $2,500 for all restaurants. Similarly, the median payroll for banquet managers and catering managers ($25,000 and $26,200, respectively, excluding bonuses**) was about 10 percent higher in club restaurants than in other tableservice establishments ($23,250 and $24,000).

The association's *Restaurant Industry Operations Report '90* confirms that club restaurants reported a high ratio of payroll and benefit expenses to total sales, compared with other full-menu tableservice operators. In 1989, nearly half (48 percent) of total sales at club restaurants went toward payroll expenses, and an additional 10 percent went for employee benefits (see chart). In comparison, total full-menu tableservice restaurants posted a lower 28 percent of total sales for payroll expenses and 5 percent for employee benefits.

Selected income and expenses for full-menu tableservice restaurants located in clubs, 1989

Payroll and benefit expenses accounted for a large proportion of operating costs at club restaurants

	Ratio to total sales**
Controllable expenses	
Payroll	48.1
Employee benefits	9.7
Direct operating expenses	9.2
Music and entertainment	1.7
Advertising and promotions	1.9
Utilities	4.8
Administrative and general	4.0
Repairs and maintenance	3.1
Occupation costs	
Rent	6.0
Property taxes	1.4
Other expenses	0.3
Property insurance	1.9

**Median values*
***All ratios are listed as a percent of total sales*

Source: National Restaurant Association, *Restaurant Industry Operations Report '90*

**Includes sporting and recreational camps*

***Insufficient data for bonuses in clubs*

When the relatively lower daily seat turnover and the relatively higher payroll expenses are taken into account, it's not surprising that club restaurants recorded a modest loss of $27 per seat in 1989. However, most club restaurants operate to provide a service to members rather than for profit. With club membership dues supplementing food and beverage income, many clubs are willing to break even or take a slight loss on food and beverage sales.

City clubs showed a higher proportion of income from food sales than country clubs did

Source: Pannell Kerr Forster, *Clubs In Town & Country 1990*

The proportion of total club revenue per member from food and beverage sales has decreased steadily since 1980

	Country clubs		City clubs	
Year	Total revenue	Food and beverage sales	Total revenue	Food and beverage sales
1980	$1,974	$ 805	$1,089	$532
1981	2,215	897	1,217	595
1982	2,462	993	1,347	663
1983	2,654	1,059	1,435	690
1984	2,845	1,103	1,484	697
1985	3,027	1,157	1,586	728
1986	3,152	1,221	1,666	755
1987	3,345	1,273	1,720	763
1988	3,590	1,334	1,777	766
1989	3,735	1,417	1,847	804
1990	3,820	1,466	1,923	863

Source: Pannell Kerr Forster, *Clubs in Town and Country 1990*

Food and beverage

According to Pannell Kerr Forster's *Clubs in Town and Country 1990*, food and beverage sales represent a large portion of overall club revenues. In 1990, food sales at country clubs reached $1,092 per member and beverage sales $375, representing 38 percent of total club revenue. The Midwest showed the highest food and beverage sales per member ($1,381 for food and $569 for beverage), while the South captured the lowest sales per member ($983 for food and $294 for beverage). Nationally, the proportion of total income per member from food and beverage sales at country clubs has decreased slightly to a 38 percent share of total revenue in 1990 from a 41 percent share in 1980.

Similarly, in 1990 food and beverage sales at city club restaurants accounted for a 45 percent share of total revenue per member, down from a 49 percent share in 1980. In 1990, while the average amount spent per member was $681 for food and $181 for beverages, spending varied significantly by region. The South captured the highest amount spent on food per member ($925), the Midwest for beverage ($249), and the East showed the lowest spending on food and beverage ($613 for food, $167 for beverage).

A considerable amount of the revenue growth at club restaurants has been coming from areas such as club sporting activities and room rentals. For example, while food and beverage sales per member at country clubs advanced 27 percent between 1985 and 1990, and membership increased 21 percent, all other sources of income (primarily sports activities, rooms and minor-operated departments) surged 41 percent. At city clubs, between 1985 and 1990, food and beverage sales per member posted a 19 percent increase, compared with a 22 percent gain in membership dues and a 27 percent increase in other sources of income per member.

According to the National Club Association's *1989 Food and Beverage* study, the average price per meal was higher in yacht clubs ($14.86) and city clubs ($14.33) than in country and golf clubs ($11.89). Nearly all yacht clubs and country and golf clubs served dinner, as did nine in 10 city clubs. All clubs reported serving lunch. More city clubs served breakfast (70 percent) than did country and golf clubs (50 percent) or yacht clubs (25 percent). Of the clubs surveyed, eight in 10 used a service charge for daily meals, as did nine in 10 for party meals.

—Elizabeth Gordon

Foodservice Market Measure–February/March 1991

In March 1991, for the first time since October 1990, more than half of all adults were foodservice patrons on a typical day. Although data for an individual month do not make a trend, this is the first indication of an improvement for the industry in 1991. Still, it should be kept in mind that the Persian Gulf war ended in late February, and both St. Patrick's Day and Easter were celebrated in March.

Although patronage was below 50 percent from November 1990 through February 1991, 53 percent of adults were foodservice patrons in March 1991—a level similar to that of one year ago. Moreover, the improvement was widespread, occurring at all meal periods and for both on and off-premises consumption.

The increase in likelihood of patronage occurring between February and March 1991 is primarily attributed to significant gains among specific demographic groups:

- men
- 45 to 64-year-olds
- consumers with household incomes of $40,000 or more, and
- Midwesterners.

The proportion of adults who were on-premises patrons was 37 percent in March 1991, well above the 32 to 33 percent level from November to February, but slightly below the 39 percent who were on-premises patrons in March 1990. Off-premises patronage posted a gain as well, up from 17 percent in February to 23 percent in March 1991—higher that the 21 percent level in March 1990.

Looking at specific meal periods, the largest gainer from February to March 1991 was lunch. Although the proportion of adults who were lunch patrons in March 1991 was below that of the previous year's March, it is much improved from the winter months of 1990-91.

—Susan Mills

Percent of adults who were foodservice patrons on a typical day

Meal period	February 1991	March 1991	Percentage point change
Breakfast	5%	7%	+2
Lunch	23	27	+4
Dinner	22	25	+3
Snack	4	5	+1

Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey

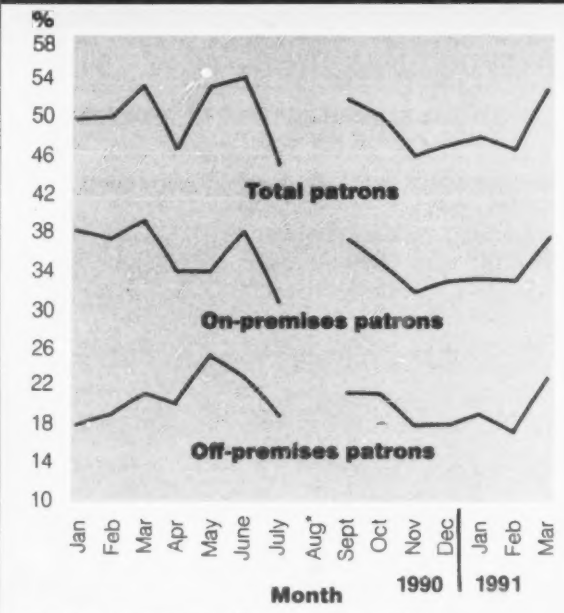
Percent of adults who were foodservice patrons on a typical day

	February 1991	March 1991	Percentage point change
Male	46%	59%	+13*
Female	47	48	+1
Age			
18 to 24 years old	60	65	+5
25 to 34 years old	54	56	+2
35 to 44 years old	46	52	+6
45 to 54 years old	42	53	+11*
55 to 64 years old	40	55	+15*
65 years old and older	34	36	+2
Annual household income			
$40,000 or more	51	61	+10*
$20,000 to $39,999	44	52	+8
Less than $20,000	44	46	+2
Region			
East	49	55	+6
Midwest	42	54	+12*
South	48	54	+6
West	47	48	+1

*Significant difference

Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey

Percent of adults who were foodservice patrons



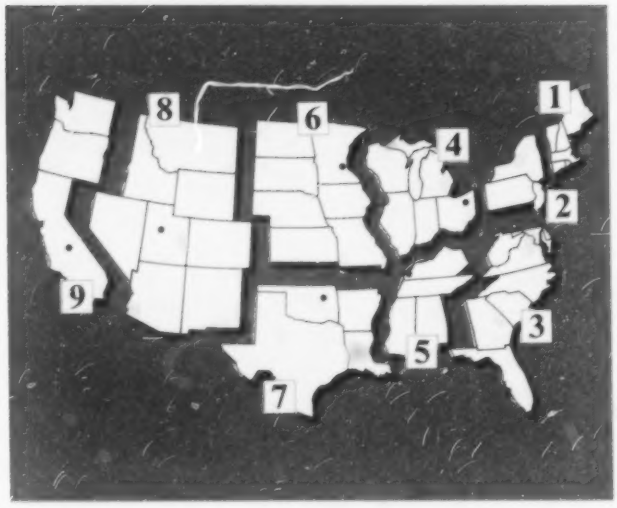
*No Market Measure was fielded in August 1990.
Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey

Foodservice Market Measure

The Foodservice Market Measure is based on 1,000 telephone interviews, conducted by the Gallup Organization each month, with a nationally representative sample of adults age 18 and older. Each person is asked the same questions:

1. Which of the following did you do yesterday?
   - Ate on the premises of a restaurant, fast food place, cafeteria or any other place where you purchased a meal or snack.
   - Purchased takeout food "to go" or had it delivered.
2. Was the food you ate on premises yesterday for breakfast, lunch, dinner or a snack?
3. Was the takeout food you purchased or had delivered for breakfast, lunch, dinner or a snack?

The monthly tracking of purchases is supplemented by quarterly inquiries on topics of industry interest.



1 NEW ENGLAND

Location: Kennebunkport, ME
Association member: John Hughes III
Operation: Windows on the Water
Profile: Upscale restaurant
In business: 6 years
Seats: 85
Meals served: Lunch, dinner

Although business got off to a slow start in January, customer traffic has since increased at Windows on the Water, says owner **John Hughes III**. Customer counts at the restaurant were up 17 percent in February and 7 percent in March, but the check average is down about 6 percent. "It is good to see customer traffic up, but people are tending to their finances more closely, and that translates into fewer orders for desserts and alcohol," says Hughes.

Summer is fast approaching, bringing with it the hordes of travelers from around the world who descend on the quiet waterfront town. "The Fourth of July through October is our busiest season. I think we'll have a good season this year. People seem more confident about traveling and spending money than last summer," says Hughes. Are any of those summer diners likely to be Kennebunkport's most famous occasional resident? "We haven't fed the President yet, but we've fed everyone else in his family," says Hughes.

2 MID-ATLANTIC

Location: New York, NY
Association member: Thomas Birchard
Operation: Veselka
Profile: Midscale restaurant
In business: 37 years
Seats: 80
Meals served: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Business is up 15 percent compared to this time last year, says Veselka's owner **Thomas Birchard**. He has a theory about the reason for the increase: "We serve low-cost, homemade, simple meals, and I think more people are looking for that kind of place when they dine out during this economy," says Birchard.

The restaurant features Eastern European Polish/Ukrainian cuisine. Menu favorites include stuffed cabbages, cheese blintzes and homemade soups. Besides the food, the real draw for customers is the people-watching opportunity that a meal at Veselka offers. Located in Manhattan's East Village, the restaurant draws a diverse crowd of artists, struggling actresses and actors, punk rockers, tourists, uptown New Yorkers and families.

The interior has not changed much since 1954 and retains an old-world feel, complete with waitresses whose native language is Polish. Since Veselka is basically a neighborhood coffee shop, Birchard likes to support local artists by displaying their art in the restaurant. One outside wall is covered with a mural by a local artist who changes it every few years.

3 SOUTH ATLANTIC

Location: Osprey, FL
Association member: Ernie Vroom
Operation: Flying Bridge Restaurant
Profile: Midscale restaurant
In business: 23 years
Seats: 318
Meals served: Lunch, dinner

"Business is flat. It's partially because of the economy, but mostly because of the overbuilding of restaurants in the area," says owner **Ernie Vroom**. Five restaurants opened in the last year in the same block as the Flying Bridge.

Vroom advertises in the newspaper and on TV to beef up business. His restaurant, which serves primarily seafood and steak items, appeals to the community's older citizens. "Sarasota County has one of the highest median ages; I think it's 55. We cater to this clientele by keeping the food simple. We don't heavily spice it, and we serve healthier items," he says.

The restaurant is family-owned, and all the members of Vroom's family work there. "The fact that it is family-run and that we have one of the best views in the county—we look out over the water—is what makes our restaurant special," says Vroom.

4 EAST NORTH CENTRAL

Location: Akron, OH
Association member: Ernest Genovese
Operation: Art's Place
Profile: Family-style restaurant
In business: 63 years
Seats: 200
Meals served: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Art's Place is a hopping spot that draws a rich mix of diners, says daytime manager **Jean Theiss**. A lunch customer might be rubbing elbows with a state senator, a mechanic, a schoolteacher, the town mayor or a next-door neighbor. "A news article the other week described the place as formica and vinyl," laughs Theiss. "It's a nice, clean restaurant that is very unpretentious. We have paper napkins and paper plates, and you can come in here in a formal or in shorts."

The restaurant's chicken and prime-rib specialties and the almost defiantly unhip atmosphere appeal to a loyal group of Akronites: 65 percent of business is daily repeat customers. "We have a friendly staff. Some of our waitresses have been here for 15 to 23 years. They know the customers, and the customers know them. People like that," says Theiss.

5 EAST SOUTH CENTRAL

Location: Paducah, KY
Association members: Arlene and Richard Jenks
Operation: Old South Cafeteria
Profile: Family-style restaurant
In business: 15 years
Seats: 180
Meals served: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

"The last three years have been up years. We have seen good steady growth," says co-owner **Richard Jenks**. "When I read about the horrible economy in New England and in Texas, I feel for those people. It doesn't seem that way here at all."

The cafeteria features local fare such as fried chicken, catfish, cornbread and turnip greens. "It's nothing too fancy, but it's good home-cooked food for a good price. Most meals are between $3.50 and $4.50," says Jenks. Most customers are senior citizens or workers who enjoy the cafeteria-style service.

Competition in the area has quadrupled in the last 12 years, says Jenks, but most competitors are located on the other side of town, close to a shopping mall. "I don't think other restaurants hurt our business that much because we appeal to a certain segment of the community," he says.

6 WEST NORTH CENTRAL

Location: Oakdale, MN
Association members: Robert D. and Kathy Miller
Operation: Toby's on the Lake
Profile: Midscale restaurant
In business: 14 years
Seats: 225
Meals served: Lunch, dinner, Sunday brunch

"Things are going great," says **Kathy Miller,** who along with her husband, **Bob Miller,** owns Toby's on the Lake, located on Tanner's Lake in suburban St. Paul. While customers seem more cautious in today's economy, Miller believes that Toby's affordable fine dining, comfortable atmosphere and friendly service keep customers coming back. Having a great location doesn't hurt either. Toby's is only minutes from the downtown hubs of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and the restaurant is adjacent to the suburban corporate offices of the 3M Company.

The old English atmosphere and house specialties such as prime rib and fresh seafood attract the young professionals who live or work in the Twin Cities area.

"Business is still growing after 14 years," marvels Miller. To keep pace with this growth, the Millers are considering the expansion of their restaurant facility, which in addition to the dining room includes a 100-seat banquet room and decks that overlook the lake.

7 WEST SOUTH CENTRAL

Location: Broken Arrow, OK
Association member: Dollie McFarland
Operation: Rex Restaurants
Profile: Fast food restaurants
In business: 15 years
Seats: 90
Meals served: Lunch, dinner

Although the Oklahoma economy has been hard hit by the recent recession, Rex Restaurants have continued to prosper. "Business has been great," says **Terri McAuliff,** senior executive vice president of the family-run company that owns nine Rex Restaurant stores in Oklahoma. "In the past two years our sales have increased by 145 percent," McAuliff adds. "We're excited about expanding into Texas and other states."

How can business at Rex Restaurants thrive in a depressed economy filled with competitors? "We've found a unique niche," explains McAuliff—a niche for fast-food convenience and prices, but with food made from homemade ingredients.

8 MOUNTAIN

Location: Provo, UT
Association members: Stuart Smith, Raynal Pearson
Operation: Annie's Pantry
Profile: Family-style restaurant
In business: 6 years
Seats: 120
Meals served: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Business is "fair" at Annie's Pantry, according to **Stuart Smith,** who co-owns the restaurant with **Raynal Pearson.** "We're coasting along," says Smith. Annie's Pantry has suffered from a combination of a sluggish local economy and a recent influx of competitors, including national chains that have opened within a mile of the restaurant. "The competition has really hurt us," says Smith.

The clientele at Annie's Pantry consists largely of guests at the adjacent TraveLodge motel and, on weekends, local residents. To compete with its new neighbors, the restaurant offers weekend specials such as an all-you-can-eat buffet or a prime-rib dinner. "The specials really seem to perk things up," notes Smith.

9 PACIFIC

Location: Visalia, CA
Association member: Patt Kong
Operation: Lamp Liter Inn & Restaurant
Profile: Midscale restaurant and inn
In business: 11 years
Seats: 80
Meals served: Lunch, dinner

Mother Nature is largely to blame for the belt-tightening times at the Lamp Liter Inn & Restaurant, which is located in a growing agricultural community in the San Joaquin Valley. According to owner **Patt Kong,** California's worst drought in years has led to water cutbacks. As if that weren't bad enough, last December's freeze destroyed the citrus crop, one of the principal crops of the region. "With the unemployment rate in the farming industry around 21 percent, people are having trouble putting food on their tables," says Kong. The price of local produce has soared.

Travelers staying at the inn account for a large part of her restaurant business, and its location on the outskirts of town draws a healthy lunchtime business crowd. Kong also relies on local residents, who seem to be the ones scaling back the most, to support her restaurant and the 400-seat banquet facilities.

—Jennifer Batty and Katherine Palumbo

The flavor of flowers

Spring is in the air, and blossoms are blooming. As you roam through the garden picking flowers to brighten your tables, you might consider petals to spruce up your menu as well.

Free of preservatives and chemicals and low in calories, flowers have added their unique taste to dishes for centuries. And with such a long history, it is unlikely that scientists will discover any life-threatening side effects. (Of course, only *unsprayed* flowers are safe to eat.)

Even backyard flowerbeds can offer many useful—and flavorful—varieties that at first may not seem suitable for the plate or the palate. Pansies, for example, add a light floral flavor to salads. Geraniums, especially the rose-scented variety, enhance sorbets and butters. Chrysanthemums, although slightly bitter, work well in salads if used sparingly or as part of a floral confetti. Even roses—whose flavors range from floral and lush to metallic and bitter—can be used to flavor salads, butters and vinegars and taste great candied.

—Washington Times

Spears of spring

To many a connoisseur, the appearance of asparagus means the arrival of spring. But these green stalks are much more than the herald of a new season. Asparagus—green, purple and white varieties—holds a place of honor in history across the world.

Asparagus ranked high with the great minds of the past. Proust praised it for its delicate shades of purple, and Cato lauded its digestibility. First-century poet Pliny the Younger was even more passionate, declaring asparagus an aphrodisiac. Marie Antoinette supposedly combined egg yolks and asparagus to maintain her sexual vigor.

Even these days, the celebration of asparagus goes beyond the kitchen and into the streets. Italians in Bassano del Grappa in the Veneto hold an annual white-asparagus-growing contest on the first Sunday in May. Succeeding Sundays find festivals in Lombardy, Piedmont and Emilia-Romana. In Spain, the town of Gava celebrates spring with a parade of giant papier-mache vegetables and an exhibition of folk art fashioned out of asparagus. In Schwetzingen, Germany, *Spargel Samstag* is celebrated on the first Saturday in May.

Schrobenhausen, north of Munich, hosts its own asparagus museum—three floors of exhibits where fans can learn about the history, cultivation and art of the stalks.

—Food Arts

Restaurant bytes

First there were the yellow pages, now there is the yellow disk—the Yellow Disk Restaurant Finder, that is. And it could be a hot new sector for restaurant advertising.

The Yellow Disk Restaurant Finder is a software package distributed by Information, Inc., and it offers customers who have computers a chance to pull restaurant dining choices up on their screens. Hungry hackers can just slide in a disk and view information about restaurants, including type of cuisine, price range, operating hours and wheelchair accessibility. Listings also detail such amenities as nonsmoking sections, children's menus and express lunches.

Customers must buy the disk, but no modem is required and there are no telephone or on-line charges. The Restaurant Finder disk is currently debuting in the Chicago area, and there are plans to cover areas nationwide within the next two years.

Participating restaurants are listed free for six months. After that, an advertising fee is charged. For an additional fee, a listing can be customized with company advertising, logos or a ticker-tape message across the bottom of the screen.

—Information, Inc.

Burgers, fries and a gallon of milk

In its ongoing attempt to scoop the competition and boost sales, one McDonald's store recently began testing a new line of products that usually line the shelves of convenience stores and supermarkets.

The new venture, known as McExtras, consists of such staples as eggs, milk, margarine and bread. The "groceries," kept in refrigerated cases near the cashiers, are available for sale at the counter and through the drive-thru window.

McDonald's apparently considers anyone who sells food to be a legitimate competitor, and that includes convenience stores and supermarkets. If McExtras passes the test, it could take quite a bite out of retail rivals.

--Advertising Age

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